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JANE CAMERON.

VOL. II.

LONDON

PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.

NEW-STREET SQUARE

MEMOIRS

OF

JANE CAMERON,

FEMALE CONVICT.

BY A PRISON MATRON,

AUTHOR OF

"FEMALE LIFE IN PRISON."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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PART I.

(continued)

"GLASGIE LIFE."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST CRIME.

To one portion of Jane Cameron's evil courses we have adverted as little as possible, for reasons which the reader will not be slow to comprehend; but it becomes an unwelcome part of our task to allude to it here at greater length.

The most profitable nature of a female thief's vocation is to trade on man's passions, and act as a decoy to lure the unwary to her home. Jane Cameron all her life had been particularly successful in this portion of her "business," and it was this portion which kept house and home together in the close.

Two and even three robberies of this character Jane Cameron has confessed to in one night—

the result never having transpired, or been reported at the police office. The programme is always the same—the man lured home, the whiskey produced, the drug stealthily dropped into the liquid, the pockets of the unconscious rifled, and the man carried down into the dark court, where the cool air revives him sufficiently to enable him to stagger to his feet, and make his way homewards with a very dreamy idea of the events that have occurred.

In Glasgow and Edinburgh there are extraordinary facilities for these nefarious proceedings, and the practice is carried on in a wholesale manner which even London thieves may wonder at. The police in both those great cities, it may be asserted again in this place, are energetic, praiseworthy members of the commonwealth, indefatigable in their crusade against crime; but the numbers of the criminal class are legion, and their system of watch and warning is as complex and well-regulated as the law's.

Jane Cameron, one dark damp evening, then, was "on duty" at the corner of a close, standing alone there as if for shelter from the misty rain

that was descending. Poorly clad, with her shawl drawn over her head, and her face—painted for the occasion—peering therefrom, she looked like a factory girl, or a weaver's daughter, waiting for the rain to clear up to proceed about her business. Feigning to be poor is as successful as feigning to be rich, and is an equal attraction to the respectable class, it has been already remarked.

"They think there's more innocence about us," would be the explanation afforded, if the question were asked of these female criminals.

Under the dark arch of this close, destiny—or a something higher—met Jane Cameron. She was in the full flush of her career, and had almost forgotten prison life; she prided herself upon her security at that time. It had been fair sailing on the deep waters, where all virtue and good feeling had been long ago submerged; she would be always successful in life; "luck" would never turn against her any more!

Here came luck in her way again that night—a sun-burnt well-dressed man of thirty or thirty-five, who lounged about the wet streets evidently in search of excitement—a man who had perhaps

come across seas, and had plenty of money with him. He glanced at Jane, who returned his glance and then looked down with that mock modesty which had made many dupes in her time; he came back past the close, where she was still standing; after a little while, stopped and asked some trivial question, to which Jane responded.

He had been drinking already, for he reeled a little in his walk, and he found it more convenient to prop his back against the side-wall and converse with her than stand outside on the pavement. Conversation began of a light bantering description; a male companion, who was on the watch, passed down the close, and, looking at Jane, played out his own small part.

"You'd better be at home with your poor mother than standing there," he reproved, with the voice of a Mentor, as he went by; "I'd be ashamed of myself, an honest girl like you."

"Hoot awa' wi' ye! mayn't a body speak to a gentleman?"

Something by way of response was muttered, and the man went on; Jane looked at the man standing by her side, and murmured—

"He'll tell my mither."

All this interested the stranger, flattered him, led him on. He consoled her for the maternal reproaches in store for her, and asked her to drink a drop of whiskey with him, to keep up her spirits.

"Not in the High Street—I'm too weel kenned there, and munna be seen talkin' to a gentleman like ye."

"Anywhere you like."

"There's a shebeen near here, where they sell the whiskey on the quiet—puir critters that ye'll na tell on, sir, again."

"Tell—why should I, my lass?"

"Coom awa' then."

The fish was caught, and Jane led the way down the close into a back street, where there were other closes, difficult in day-time to distinguish from one another—impossible at night.

"This is a dark hole of a place, my lass," he muttered.

"It's alwa' dark here. I'm skeered to come this way alane in the nicht," said Jane; "they think we puir bodies are na gude eno' for the gas."

Jane had led him round to her own close; and presently they were proceeding slowly and cautiously upstairs to the den into which so many had been entrapped. A knocking at the door of the particular house, a gruff "wha's there?" from the interior.

"It's a' richt: a gentleman for drink."

Into the room, where Black Barney sat by the fire smoking his pipe and endeavouring to look as much like a landlord as possible; by the fireside a woman and a youth of eighteen, a promising pupil in the Devil's school; a potent smell of whiskey pervading the narrow room.

The new-comer, who had been trapped thus, looked suspiciously at the inmates of the room, probably felt uneasy, and repentant of the imprudent step which had taken him to these questionable quarters.

"Twa wee draps o' whiskey for the gentleman and meesel'," said Jane Cameron.

"We don't sell whiskey," said Barney, feigning to be suspicious in his turn.

"It's a' richt, I tell ye."

"Well, it's an honest face: I trust the gentleman."

And the whiskey was produced.

The gentleman remained still suspicious, however, the appearance of Black Barney not being conducive to mental composure, and the watchful eyes of the woman and lad tending doubtless to disturb him. He was a man more than ordinarily careful; probably a hard, firm man at times. This was a matter requiring much delicate management to be carried successfully to the end.

Jane Cameron and the girl at the fireside began laughing and talking together whilst the whiskey was being poured out. The stranger joined in the jesting, but kept his eyes upon the whiskey-bottle.

Drugging was a matter of some difficulty with a man watching every movement; and Black Barney postponed the attempt to stupefy for a while. Presently he would be more off his guard. They did have these over-careful people at times!

The whiskey was drunk by the stranger and Jane; and the latter, playing her part well, helped to subdue the secret alarm of him

who had been induced to accompany her. The girl at the fire began singing, and then Jane was induced to sing in return; and the stranger sat down before the fire, filled his pipe, and proceeded to make himself comfortable.

"Take some more whiskey, Jane," was the suggestion at the conclusion of the song.

"Na mair: I dinna like it. I must gang hame to mither now."

"Another song first," said the visitor; "it's a capital voice."

"And mair whiskey, sir," said the girl at the fire. "It's na vera aften we hae a real gentleman amang us. Shall we say glasses roond, sir?"

"With all my heart. Glasses round."

The whiskey flowed from the stone bottle. This time the drug was freely tilted into the dram-glass proffered the stranger. He proposed the health of the assembled company, drank about half the whiskey, and then stopped short and dubiously regarded the remainder in his glass.

"Hallo! what's this?"

"What's what?" asked Barney.

"I don't like this stuff: it's not like the other."

"It's out of the same bottle, that's all."

"Is it?" was the quiet answer.

The crisis was approaching. There was no more singing. The depraved gang was on the alert. The prelude to the tragedy had been played. The business was not likely to end so smoothly as usual, if this man did not drink *all* his whiskey.

"Yes it is. Do you think I sell two sorts of whiskey?" asked Barney, who thought picking a quarrel perhaps the most expeditious method of bringing affairs to a conclusion.

"I think it's time for me to go home," said the stranger, rising with difficulty to his feet. "I sha'n't stop any longer. Good night!"

"Drink your whiskey."

"Something has been put in it: I'll have no more;" and the dram-glass was hurled into the fireplace.

Black Barney had taken his place with his back to the door—a formidable barrier in the way of a man's peaceable egress.

"Let me pass."

"Pay for the glass first. You have broken it."

"How—how much?"

The stranger was becoming confused—the drug was mounting to his brain; but he was a powerful man, who fought hard against the influence, and his eyes had become open to the danger before him.

Barney mentioned a price for the glass, and the stranger fumbled in his pocket for the money. The time had come; and with a life-preserver Barney aimed a blow at the man before him, who reeled back, and stood clutching the mantelpiece and swaying to and fro.

"My God! why did I come here?" he groaned. Then a sense of the danger into which he had thrust himself nerved him to defence, and he made a rush at his assailant.

"Dinna hit him again, Barney," some one cried; "he'll drap in a minute—he's bleedin' now—it's a' richt!"

But Barney was a demon at times, and opposition rendered him disregardful of consequences. The blow was struck a second time, with more

appalling effect, and the stranger fell like a dead man on the floor with a noise that shook the whole house.

"Quick as you can, girls," said Barney; "feel in his pockets, and hand it all over here: we'll square in the morning. Let's get him out of the place before he bleeds too much."

"I think ye hae settled him, Barney. Good God! what shall we do then?" cried Cameron.

"Don't be a fool—he's only stunned. Where's his purse?"

The work was hurriedly proceeded with, and Cameron knelt on the floor by the door and shivered with fright. Deeds of robbery and violence she had been a witness to before, but had never been an accomplice in so desperate an act as this. The man did not move, his eyes were glazed, and the blood stole on towards the door and was making its way underneath, when Barney shrieked to her to stop it.

"Don't let it get out on the landing, or we're done for," cried Barney; "stop it with your apron."

Jane stemmed the crimson tide flowing onwards

with her apron, whilst the robbery was proceeded with. The other woman was pale with suspense; the boy of eighteen had lost all presence of mind, and stood shivering before the fire; Barney looked more grave than ordinary.

"I can feel his pulse," he said exultantly after a while; and Jane, who had seen the gallows on the Court house and the crowd on Glasgow Green looming before her, cried out, "I'm so glad! I'm so glad; oh! Barney, what made you hit him twice?"

"Let's get him downstairs," said Barney, without replying to the question. And the two women and Barney lifted the prostrate form and went down the dark stairs with it and into the close. Here a noise alarmed them, and they left the body on the ground and hurried back to the room, which was now vacated by the lad who had been a witness to the attack.

"Clear up as soon as you can," said Barney, "and put the light out."

The woman volunteered to go downstairs and watch again, but Barney thought the precaution useless, and might lead them into trouble; then she began to cry because she could not get home.

Jane, firm but pale, went to work as Barney had directed, but the fear of detection was still on her, and how it would all end kept her heart beating unnaturally fast. The women asked Barney's advice, and Barney treated it, or affected to treat it, lightly. Presently the money was shared—the booty was very small, after all—and the purse burned, and then Barney went downstairs to do the watching part himself, he said, and was so long gone that Jane went stealing down after him.

Barney was not to be found, and the body of the man was gone from the close. Jane returned to the room to find her accomplice on her knees.

"The sicht o' her skeered me as muckle as anythin'," said Jane; "a woman like her prayin' in that room. A Catholic woman she was, but as bad as any o' us."

"What be ye kneelin' there for noo?" asked Jane of her.

"I'm praying to the Virgin that we *sha'n't be found out!*"

Not that the man might recover, or that her sins might be forgiven, but that the evil deeds

done in the darkness might remain there for ever unfathomable.

The two women did not lie down; they piled coals on the fire to more quickly dry the floor, which they had washed, and burnt the apron, which had become bloodstained, and then crouched in the red glare, and thought of the danger they were in.

"Where 's Dick gane, I wonder? What's become of Barney?"

"Barney's cut it, we sha'n't see him any mair," said Jane's companion. "I'm thinking we had all better go."

Then came a light tapping at the door, and a female voice whispering "Jane." The door was unbolted, and the woman lodging in the next room came in, dressed.

"Where hae ye been?"

"I've just cam hame; Joe's been wi' the crowd; I fancy it's a' split upon, and the police will be here presently. Dick's wi' the police; we've passed it on to ye at ance."

"Let us be off."

The instinct of danger approaching took Jane

and her companion out of the close. At the opening into the street they separated without a word, Jane making for the haunt of another pal, renting a lodging-house which the police did not frequent so often.

The man who had been maltreated had been found by strangers and carried away, and the police were not yet fully on the alert. Jane found her way unobserved to the lodging-house, which was still and quiet, and the proprietress of which was in no hurry to turn out of bed to respond to her summons.

"What's the matter? What's up?" asked the woman, opening the door at last.

"Hush! I'll tell ye presently. Has Barney been here?"

"No."

"Where can he hae gane to?"

"Is anythin' wrong?"

"Vera wrang."

Jane was communicative; the woman could be trusted, and had helped her at a pinch before. The woman sat down in her night-gown before the fire still burning in the grate—the fires are

seldom out in the lowest dens, night or day—and listened to Jane's story, offering her the best advice afterwards.

"I'd be off at once, and not stop here, Jane."

"Would ye?"

"I'd go to Pollockshields, where there'll be a trouble to get hold of you for a while. Get out of Glasgow as soon as you can."

Jane understood this advice, and saw the full force of it on the instant. For the enlightenment of my readers ignorant of the police laws existent at that time in Scotland, I may say that Pollockshields, a suburb of Glasgow, lay out of the jurisdiction of the Glasgow police, and afforded a place of safety for many a fugitive criminal. This Pollockshields was at that time a source of considerable annoyance to the Glasgow authorities, and a formidable hindrance to the due course of justice; a criminal could not be arrested there by the city police; it was beyond the municipal bounds, and had for a time a police of its own, till the authorities there quarrelled about the expense, and gave up police protection alto-

gether. Renfrewshire, in which county Pollockshields is situate, was notorious at that period as a place of refuge, and became, under lax authority, as bad a place as the lowest haunts of Glasgow. A thief once hidden in Pollockshields, for instance, had to be hunted out at the cost of the prosecutor, who found his account run heavily if the search were of long duration: there were fees for apprehending a criminal, fees for his conveyance to Glasgow, and other expenses naturally dependent upon the time expended and the labour incurred in the arrest.

Jane considered the advice, and, like an unwise woman, rejected it. There were grave reasons for departing before the town was astir and the story had been bruited about too much, but there was a woman's reason for remaining.

"I'm thinkin' that Barney will come here in the course o' to-morrow. I dinna like to do anethin' wi'oot him, ye ken."

"Do as you like, but you're a fool of a woman to stop."

Jane stopped; the woman went to bed, and slept peacefully, undisturbed by her friend's

troubles; the fugitive, too restless to sleep, sat staring at the fire and hoping for Barney's coming. In the daylight the lodgers turned out of their various compartments, many of them greeting Cameron and asking what brought her there, and receiving evasive answers.

Before twelve o' clock in the day, those lodgers with whom trade was slack returned with the news, which had already found its way into the Glasgow papers in the shape of a small paragraph, which Jane spelt over. The man was not dead at least, and Jane felt relieved at that portion of the information; but then came fresh news, that the close had been searched, and her room entered and minutely examined by the detectives.

"They've been speering about you and Barney," one remarked. "I'd get away as soon as I could, over the brig there."

"I'll wait till the nicht."

"Barney will never come here," affirmed the landlady.

"I ken him best; I'm sure he wull."

But Jane Cameron was wrong, although her sanguine nature kept her in that close till the

night came again. Before night-time she had drunk much whiskey to sustain her courage and "keep her narves straight," as she termed it, and was more deaf to advice, more obstinate and quarrelsome in consequence. She fell asleep, with her head against the mantel-shelf, and dreamed of the absent Barney; last night's fatigue, the reaction from last night's excitement, combined with the drink, took her off into Dream-land, and she was dozing when those of whom she had been warned came creeping into the room where she sat.

"How long has this woman been here?" asked the detective of the landlady.

"Since last night."

"At what time?"

"Atween two and three, p'raps. I canna sae; I was woke up oot o' my sleep."

"Has Black Barney been here?"

"Nae sign of the Cush hae I seen, or want to see. I dinna like the mon."

Jane heard all this, and yet did not become thoroughly alive to the danger which had surrounded her, and from which there was no

escape. She only awoke thoroughly to the grim truth when a hand shook her roughly by the shoulder.

"Now Jennie, Jennie!"

"What is it?"

She sat up, and struggled at composure. The well-known faces of the detective officer and constable were beside her; standing at the door was a policeman in uniform.

"You're wanted at the office."

"I 've done naethin'. What do they say I 've done?"

"You'll hear down at the office. I'm sent to take you—that's all."

"Well" (rising, with a heavy sigh), "I suppose I maun gae wi' ye. Gude bye, Mrs. Edmonds. Tell Barney where I am, if ye can. Now then, I'm ready. Ye'll find it a' a mistake."

She did her best to assume a guiltless demeanour, but it was an up-hill effort. She knew that the worst had happened, that the iron hand of the law had tightened round her at last, and now held her firmly in its grip.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SENTENCE.

A PRIVATE examination of witnesses, in conformity with Scotch law, a postponement of the case for further particulars, the identification of Jane Cameron and her female companion by the prosecutor, and Jane taken once more to Glasgow Gaol, there to await her trial by jury at the Circuit Court of Justiciary. She maintained her innocence still; said that it was all a conspiracy of the lad Richard ——, who had turned Queen's evidence, and was an awkward witness for the prosecution; but, before the trial came on, she had reflected upon the matter, and, taking into consideration the mass of facts against her, thought it more advisable to plead guilty, and trust to the mercy of her judge.

In the cell at Glasgow Prison, awaiting her sentence, she was left to reflect upon the fate that lay before her in the future. Would it be four years, seven years, ten years—how many years taken from her life? How many years set aside from the streets which had been life to her, and confinement apart from all that had constituted "*happiness*," would be fixed upon her? The thought and the suspense were horrible, and, as her trial did not come on at once, she begged for work to relieve her from the monotony which preyed upon her, and seemed driving her mad.

Her trial came on; the evidence was clear enough, and the case was easily despatched; she was sentenced and sent to prison; and judges, lawyers, and police forgot all about her before her sentence was three months old. Crime following crime with constant and heart-depressing regularity, the same story told so often, and three keys—neglect, ignorance, and drink!—ever played on to the one awful tune.

She felt bewildered by the importance and gravity of her trial, by the judge on the bench, and the state and solemnity surrounding her.

In the midst of her suspense, her incertitude of the sentence which would be passed upon her, there came at times a little spasm of pride to think that all the pomp and parade of justice were for her, that all those people before her were interested more or less in her case, and that the crowd representing the public had come to hear about her, and would go home talking about her.

She had heard the old pals in the vennels and closes boast of their trials; how they had stood it; what they had said to the judge to show their defiance, or what phase of hypocrisy they had assumed to soften his heart with regard to them, or warm the feelings of the *fifteen* jurymen assembled to judge of the lights and shadows of the case. They had even had sham trials by jury of a Sunday in the closes—sham counsellors, who were paid a penny by the sham prisoner, and received another penny if by their eloquence or ingenuity they obtained the prisoner's "liberation." She had never thought of her own trial coming—of the sentence in the future for her. And here it was, and there were judge, jury, prosecutor, counsellors, pursuers, defenders,

and witnesses—all for her and the woman who stood by her side. Black Barney had not entered an appearance, having been fortunate enough to evade those who had been searching for him, and the law was only to take its course with these women.

The case was soon entered into and despatched. There were other cases to hear and adjudicate upon, and time was valuable. There was nothing difficult to arrive at in this instance: a robbery with violence, the woman who had lured the prosecutor to the close sworn to, and identified by the police as an old offender—all was plain as noonday—noonday glare, from which this darkened nature shrank.

They were hours of suspense, at the time, to Cameron; thinking of it afterwards, it seemed all over in a minute. The case was summed up by the judge, and the jury retired, to return almost immediately with her future in their hands. The chancellor, as foreman of the jury, announced that the verdict was unanimous—"Guilty!" The clerk of the court called out, "Gentlemen, is this your verdict?" The assent

was given, and the verdict recorded in the great books of the law.

And then the sentence—ten years for the accomplice by Jane's side, and *fourteen years' transportation* for Jane Cameron.* "Clear the court! Remove this prisoner, and bring in the next. The case is ended!"

Jane Cameron went back to the Bridewell in Glasgow Prison—was passed from the ward apportioned for prisoners before trial to the ward where long-sentenced women are placed under lock and key. The prison dress was given her, the old prison work was set before her, the faces of matron and female warders looked in again—the latter varied by a new face here and there—the old scale of dietary, the early rising, the work, the porridge breakfast, ox-head soup, and gruel supper, the prayers in the ward, and the chaplain's voice reverberating along the passages, the separate cell and the wedge-shaped airing space, separated from the prison ground by iron bars—all solitary, dull, and unvaried by a single

* I may reiterate here that this was not the true sentence passed upon Cameron.

incident—all so different to the existence from which she had been snatched away—all so terrible, despite the comfort, cleanliness, and order of the place!

"This will kill me," Jane Cameron thought. "I shall die in prison, and never see Barney again!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

AWAITING THE ORDER.

LIFE on the separate system was a severe torture to Jane Cameron. Life in prison, under any phase, was scarcely endurable; she could not settle down to the ever unvarying rule that made a machine of her, and shut her out from evil action.

Confinement for twelve months nearly drove her mad—what would confinement for fourteen years do? Only a year or two less than her whole lifetime! She could not see the end of her time, or the light at the journey's end where liberty would brighten it.

At Glasgow Prison, she was kept as much apart from her fellow-prisoners as circumstances would

permit; but space was still circumscribed, and an influx of twenty, thirty, sixty-days' prisoners to the Bridewell, threw in her way a companion at times. It was these fugitive faces which kept her from wholly despairing. She met those who could whisper to her about the old world in the Glasgow streets, and the old pals whose life was spent therein. She heard no more of Black Barney, however; he had vanished away from the North-country, where he had had so narrow an escape from the hands of justice.

The faces disappeared, and it became solitary again, and in solitary Jane Cameron began to fret over the inevitable fate to which her guilty courses had reduced her. There were no repentant thoughts at this time; she was only sorry for the stern result of the "last job." She was as impenetrable as ever, but she was utterly wretched, and that brought the tears to her eyes. The chaplain did his best with her, but she turned a deaf ear to his discourse; she could not bear to think of all that he told her; it did not console her; it did not induce her to pray; she would *not* reflect!

Two or three months' continual solitary at this period cast her down to so low an estate that she fell sick, and was removed by the doctor's orders to the infirmary.

Then, there was a more liberal diet, together with "company." She was comparatively happy in this new position; it was very pleasant to be so close to death's door, and be paid so much attention. When she was better, she and her "company" talked of her own future; where she was to go, what was her best policy. There were some very old prisoners in the infirmary at the time—women who *studied hard* for comfortable quarters, and boasted of the success of many schemes which had kept them on infirmary diet. They recommended her to remain in the infirmary as long as she could, and gave her valuable recipes for attacking her health, not worth alluding to in this place.

They drew her fancy sketches of her future, which she believed in, and spoke of the advantages of the English prisons, if she were fortunate enough to be transmitted thither. She would have a year's solitary; and then, if there were room at

Perth—not the Perth Prison of 1863, be it remembered—they thought she would be removed there to better diet and association. If not to Perth, to Millbank Prison in London, which they had heard was not a nice place by any means; but then from Millbank Prison one went on to Brixton, which was "prime." And at both places less oatmeal porridge, no ox-head soup, and no treacle water when milk was scarce—ugh!—but lots of meat, potatoes, and bread—"so they had heard."

There was the uncertainty of her term at Glasgow Prison—how long it would last? when a vacancy would occur? whom she was waiting for? They were always waiting for other prisoners, and these long delays, and these little perplexities with regard to prison discipline and correction, worried her, and kept her feverish.

Despite the stories of the advantages of the English system, Jane Cameron had a yearning for her native land, and just then a secret horror of being taken to an English prison. This is an exceptional feeling: prisoners crave for change, for any change, even from bad to worse, that may offer some little incident in a monotonous career. But Jane had

been to London, and knew what a long way off it was; there was a certain amount of satisfaction in feeling that she was in Glasgow still, in catching a glimpse now and then of Scotch prisoners, in being spoken to by Scotch female warders. The English would laugh at her and her accent; she would scarcely be able to make out what they said to her; the English rules would be different, and it would take her a long while to understand them; and Glasgow Prison was "a kind of home like!"

These thoughts whilst she was in the infirmary; but when she got back to her cell, and the old monotony of labour began, when there was nothing to look at but the four walls, and day after day passed without bringing her the news of the change that was coming, the desire for that change began to assert itself. She remembered the advice of her late companions, and set to work to make herself ill once more; she refused her food, and practised all the evil arts which are in vogue at prisons, and back she went to the infirmary in due course, or rather this time to an infirmary cell, where another prisoner waited upon her, a

really penitent and pious prisoner, to whom Jane took a dislike.

Cameron has often spoken of the days of uncertainty preceding her departure for England; her worst days, she considered. "I ken that I was hardenin' fast eno' at that time," were her remarks; "that I ne'er felt a warse woman in a' my leef. The fourteen years made me care for naethin'; I had the fancy that I should die lang afore my time was up, and that it was na gude warking hard for a character."

It began to impress her that Government had been very hard upon her, and that the greatest trouble she could give Government in return would be serving it out after her own fashion. Still she had not arrived at that pitch of defiance which leads to "breaking out" and attacks on prison property; she felt inclined to be disagreeable to the female warders without inconveniencing herself in any great degree. But she was really hardening. She hated her warder for not being kind to her; she hated the parson for troubling her mind, and the governor for not taking more notice of her; she hated everybody and everything.

The order for her transmission to the English prison arrived at last, and, in company with other long-sentenced women whom Scotland was very glad to get rid of, Jane Cameron left Glasgow.

Although the change was an excitement for which she had prayed, she fretted a little at going away. Her mind was not a strong one, and her ideas were prone to assume a variety of shapes. That which troubled her one hour was a source of satisfaction the next.

"They'll bring me bock to Glasgie when my time's up," was her consolation; "they will na turn me oot o' preeson into a strange place."

But Jane Cameron never saw the Glasgow streets again; she left her world of crime and temptation for ever—for *good*!

END OF PART THE FIRST.

PART II.

A PRISONER'S PROGRESS.

CHAPTER I.

MILLBANK.

SCOTCH prisoners came by sea to our London prisons in those days, suffering very much from sea-sickness during the long passage, but enjoying the novelty of their position, and regretting afterwards that there were no similar changes to ensue.

I believe Jane Cameron was three days reaching the Pool, that in the interim her spirits revived, and she looked less lugubriously at the aspect of things in the future. She began to count the years between her and freedom. After all, with the deduction for good conduct, there were not before her ten years of prison servitude; and time *would* pass, even in a prison, and bring the liberty days nearer. What were a few years of

imprisonment to her? She would be a young woman still when she emerged from the shadowy and silent region of prison-life. How very careful she would be for the future; never again to be caught so easily, and locked away from all that distance and separation lent so much "enchantment" to! So there was no repentance in Jane Cameron at that period; she thought of nothing better or more pure awaiting her when she was free again; and she only mourned for the *accident* that had set her apart from old associations. Despite the hardening process to which I have alluded, she was an impressionable woman—even to some extent a grateful woman. In the future days of her career at Brixton and Millbank, she spoke even gratefully of the matron of the Glasgow Prison—the matron of Scotch prisons, be it remembered again, is the lady superintendent, or deputy superintendent of our English gaols—of her kindness, attention, earnest desire for her moral and spiritual welfare.

"She *was* a gude lady; she wished evera soul o' us weel. If I had on'y leestened to her mair!" said Jane at a later date.

I have reason to believe that that earnest and energetic matron of Glasgow Prison is still at her post, occupying the same position, and striving steadily to work some improvement in those wilful *children* under her charge. Many long years of prison service have not rendered her task wholly monotonous, or crushed her zeal, or destroyed her hopes of doing good. A friend of the author's, passing through that prison as a "visitor" a few months since, found her at her post, still the watchful sentinel, serving her country and her God.

Jane Cameron, accompanied by one or two other prisoners, in charge of a female warder, and, if I mistake not, also of a male warder, of the prison she had quitted for ever, went up the Thames in a galley to Millbank Stairs, and entered the gates of that great gloomy prison-house, concerning which she had heard many stories in her time.

"They cut your hair in the English places," she had been told more than once by the Scotch "*returns*," and she had shuddered and thought that *that* was hard at least. She was prepared

for the ordeal, however; and the reception-matron of Millbank sheared off, to the statutable length, the hair of which Jane Cameron had been proud.

"Mind ye, this is hard lines," was Jane's comment, as she rose and looked at the extensive depredation committed. "What's the gude o' clippin' a lassie's hair like that?"

The reception-matron did not expatiate at any length upon the advantages to be derived from the loss, and Jane Cameron somewhat sullenly marched off to her bath. Still she was a woman of a philosophical turn; and it consoled her to think that it did not much matter how short her hair had been cut just at present, and that there were plenty of years for it to grow again. In her bath she thought of Barney, and gave a sudden, sharp laugh at the idea of Barney not knowing her with her hair cropped short and her prison cap on.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the matron.

"I'm thinkin' how auld and ugly I shall look, miss," was the reply.

Jane Cameron was duly installed in the Mill-

bank uniform—a brown serge dress, blue check apron, and muslin cap—and taken to one of the pentagons to begin solitary on the English system. The iron grating was locked upon her, the outer door secured upon the iron grating, and there she was in her new home!

Very shortly afterwards she began to draw a comparison between Millbank and Glasgow Prison. There was more order, possibly, in this vast Government establishment, and there was more to eat, which was a great consideration. If it had not been for the solitary, she could have "settled down;" but she had had plenty of solitary at Glasgow, and the probationary period here was a great trial to her. She learned the rules in a little while; she was made aware that there were only three months of strict solitary for her, to be followed by three months of extra cellular discipline, with the outer door open during the day, and a glimpse of life in the wards offered her. After that period would come three months in the "Association Ward"—life in a cell with one, perhaps two, of her contemporaries—and, good behaviour manifested

throughout that period, a pass to Brixton Prison, where discipline was less rigidly enforced, and association was "the order of the day;" but, before all this, three months of strict solitary, which was not pleasant—which she felt preyed upon her, and tried her temper in a way for which she was never able to satisfactorily account.

The second day after her arrival a "break-out" occurred, and the hush of that noiseless ward was disturbed by one of those extraordinary outbreaks for which Millbank Prison in particular has been always famous. Jane had been a witness to a break-out in Glasgow Prison before this, but the outburst of demoniacal fury evidenced in this instance was something new and exciting; it made the blood run more swiftly in her veins and set her heart beating rapidly. This was a change from the depressing stillness and the wearisome nature of coir-picking; she dropped her work, and ran up and down her cell, wringing her hands together. Here was an English girl acting in open defiance of the rule which enjoined strict silence; she had heard of the English girls, and

what "good ones" they were at a row, when they liked.

There was a pattering of matrons' feet down the wards; the voices of other women, more excited than herself, crying out, "What is it?—what is it?"—in defiance of all orders to keep still; there was glass shivering on to the stones, and a fresh disturbance lower down to keep the refractory ones company; after a while much scuffling and screaming, an arrival of the male officers, and a forcible removal from the ward of those who had so seriously disturbed it.

And the disturbance is of a character to unsettle a whole ward; the example is always more or less contagious. Jane Cameron was reckless for a day or two after this; over her coir-picking, she brooded as to what would be the effect of a smash, and what a pleasure it would be to stave out all the windows with her "pint," and hear the glass rattling down as she had heard it two days since. But her breaking-out propensities were not developed at that time, and after a while she cooled down, and thought that it would be better to keep quiet and work her way

towards Brixton slowly, methodically, and industriously.

And, after all, Millbank monotony was not the monotony of Glasgow Prison. She caught sight of her fellow-creatures more often—her fellow-convicts. At a quarter-past nine every morning there was the clanging of the bell for chapel, and at ten she was standing before the closed doors, waiting for them to be thrown open, and to emerge with her Prayer-book, hymn-book, and Bible, into the ward where the prisoners of that particular pentagon were awaiting also the signal to move. There was no going to church at Glasgow Prison; one heard prayers through doors left ajar there, it may be remembered; and here were the novelty and excitement of the day. Here were faces of her own species to look at; acquaintances to make without addressing a word to; fancies to take to particular women, strange, morbid fancies, which are termed "pallings in," and which contain the elements of love, hate, jealousy, and are the source of half the quarrels in our prisons. Jane Cameron "palled in" like the rest, as we shall presently see.

A few days following her arrival, when Cameron stepped into the ward after the doors had been unfastened and the signal had been given to leave the cells, she cast a glance round her and met the curious stares of her fellow-prisoners—always curious concerning a new comer—what are her antecedents?—what she's in for?—where did she come from? Proceeding to chapel, each prisoner a yard apart from the other, she felt a hand touch the skirt of her dress.

"Don't look round. What's your name?"

"Cameron."

"Scotch?"

"Ay."

"Do you know Sandy McWilliam?"

"Na."

"Oh!"

That was the first dialogue, delivered in a quick whisper, with which she was favoured. It was meagre and unsatisfactory, but it was relief from "*solitary*," and worth thinking about. The matron on duty had been "done," and there was satisfaction in that too!

Going to chapel was a good safety-valve from the dark thoughts over the oakum-picking—the work which is first given to new-comers—women "on probation."

In chapel there were more women-faces, amongst them one or two which Cameron fancied that she recognized, which was possible enough, considering the sea of crime that had swept by her in her guilty days. After chapel there was another escape-valve from her dark thoughts—the airing-ground, where human life was visible, and when for an hour she went round the grounds, marching in Indian file, slowly, and ostensibly silently. But a chance to talk always occurred during the hour, and in the course of a few weeks Jane Cameron understood the life, character, and sentence of half the women in her ward. She became as quick as the rest of her contemporaries in eluding the vigilance of her matron's eyes, knew that it was perfectly safe to talk at the extreme distance from her officer, and that to present a grave and silent demeanour as she passed her was essential to good breeding.

All her little bits of gossip were conducted without moving her head, scarcely her lips—even her first quarrel with the woman in advance, who swore at her for talking in Scotch, and rendering three-fourths of her conversation unintelligible.

So round and round the airing-ground for an hour, everybody seizing the opportunity to speak upon one topic or another—the murmur of the voices sometimes increasing to a pitch that rendered the matron's interference compulsory, and occasionally necessitated an "All in!" which woke up an indignant protest, and always much mutual recrimination amongst the prisoners for "bawling out like a fool." Here also the characters of the matrons were discussed—who was a "good sort," and who was a "bad sort"—who would allow a little deviation from the rules, and who was "hard as nails," and wouldn't give a "blessed chance away!" Here the true characters of the prisoners sprang to the light, and the hypocritically demure became the lewd or the blasphemous; here the vile nature of at least one-half of these outcasts asserted itself, and

startled even Jane Cameron, who had been a Glasgow thief all her life.

"I larnt a gude deal that was bad in Millbank," said Jane Cameron, adding, a little conceitedly, "I found some awfu' lassies amang the English; they're warse than ony in Glasgie."

In the real "professional," to whatever city she may belong, the writer of this work sees but little difference. Taken as a class, however, the Liverpool women may be considered the very worst—the hardest to tame or impress, the most difficult to move to any sense of what is good, pure, or holy.

After exercise came work again—oakum-picking, which to Jane Cameron was simply detestable. She asked for other work, and was refused, which annoyed her, and reduced her to the verge of a break-out—why should she not "smash," and show her sense of being slighted? In the airing-ground the woman who preceded her had, without turning her head, spoken much of smashing as an amusement without which prison life would be especially monotonous. It was pure fun; it "paid

out" the governor; it upset the matrons; it "kicked up a dust;" and there was a jolly bit of excitement in being hauled off to the dark by the men—and as for the dark, it was nothing when you were used to it! The woman who offered this pernicious advice was a regular "smasher," as it is termed—took a morbid delight in destroying prison property, and disturbing the order of a ward.

Still Jane Cameron remained on the good-conduct list; she was anxious to proceed to Brixton, and see what life was like at the new prison in Surrey, and the advice of the woman in advance did not appear worth following—at all events, without due cause.

In the airing-ground one day the woman said to Cameron—

"I'm going to smash when I get back, Cameron."

"What for?"

"Because Peggy is. Peggy's tired of her ward, and wants a bit of a lark. You smash too, and we shall all get to the dark together—p'raps in the same dark cell, which will be rare fun."

Cameron thought it over. A desire for change

began to seize upon her—if she were sure of company in the dark cell, an outbreak would be worth attempting; but the amount of convenient space at the disposal of the authorities was a matter of some doubt, and scarcely worth the risk under the circumstances.

However, she promised—she was always prolific of promises, and had seldom said "No" in her life—and in the course of the day the smashing occurred, in a brisk, business-like manner—the bell was rung for the men—and far off down the ward Peggy commenced following her comrade's example. In the midst of the uproar that ensued, the woman hammered against the cell-walls with her broom, and called "Cameron, Cameron, you sneak!" and Jane made a rush at her broom, looked up at the windows, and felt impelled towards mischief by a power with which it was difficult to cope.

"I'm thinkin' that I had muckle better let it alane," she murmured, and made a dash at the blankets, and wrapped her head in them to keep out the noise—a position in which she was found by her matron long afterwards.

"Why, what's the matter, Cameron?" said her officer.

"Naethin'—I'm better now. I was near breakin' the winders—that's a'."

"And you thought better of it?"

"Ay."

"There's a good girl! You do not want to give us any extra trouble and worry. Thank you, Cameron."

They were kind words, and Cameron listened open-mouthed to them—took them in greedily, and thought over them for the rest of the day. She was a woman always grateful for kindness, and whom a little kindness affected—therefore an exception in one respect to many of the convicts by whom she was surrounded. She was pleased for the remainder of the day—proud of being thanked for having command over the feelings that had been excited to evil. This matron in particular was a superior being from that day forth—a woman to strive to please and serve, if only to win one of her gentle smiles by way of return.

And then the matron next week was removed

to a different ward, and a brisker, sharper young woman reigned in her stead, and confused matters, "just as she was getting on so well, too!"

Let me add here, for the benefit of prison governors and superintendents, who are not always careful in the matter, that it is bad policy to change the matrons too often from one ward to another. It takes time for an officer to understand her women—it takes a longer time for the prisoners to understand *her*. All that study of character which is essential to the well-being of a female pentagon has to be begun afresh, and the prisoners are excited by losing their officer, more especially if it be an officer to whom they are accustomed, or have become attached. I have known a whole ward almost mutinous under the change, and a break-out or two are sure to follow, no matter what care may be exercised on the part of the new-comer.

Jane Cameron lost her matron, and, what was worse for herself, took a secret dislike to the new ward-officer. Sudden affections and sudden dislikes are of rapid growth in gaol; a love that lasts all a prisoner's "time," and is the love of a dog

for its mistress, is no more rare than the hate which is maliciously nursed for some one in authority who has offered unintentionally "a slight." Female prisoners, after all, are intensely impressionable. If the right word were always spoken at the right time—if the right matron were always in the right place—what good might ensue, and what harm might be turned aside into the darkness for ever!

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST OFFENCE.

TIME went on at Millbank Prison. Jane Cameron had nearly spent three months without a report; the hour was coming nearer every day for the inner door to be opened, and the life of the ward—still-life at its best—to be seen through the iron grating, through which a purer air and a better light made its way.

She had become more dissatisfied—a complaint to which most prisoners are subject—and more inclined to resent an "offence," or resist an "imposition." A female prisoner almost immediately forgets the nature of the crime for which she is suffering incarceration; she settles down to her place, and is even tenacious about the rights

appertaining thereto. Seven, ten, fifteen years for her—let her be treated well and fairly—no favouritism, and no letting other prisoners have the start of her, receive more kind words, or be let out more often on cleaning and dusting expeditions! If treated unfairly, woe to the glass, blankets, and sheeting; to the matron who has slighted her, if there be a chance to spring upon her; to peace and content, so long as she remains in the ward over which that officer holds jurisdiction! A prisoner is ever watchful, and she is a careful matron who can steer clear of "offending" her. If the woman be resentful and malicious, at Brixton Prison at least, she has the power of unsettling a dozen of her fellow-prisoners.

Jane Cameron, I have remarked, did not "take kindly" to her new matron, and the matron saw little to admire in the character of Cameron. Although Cameron had not been reported for misconduct, and been guilty only of a few trifling deviations from the rules of discipline, the ward matron was distrustful of her prisoner, and offered her none of those little advantages of which some women are fortunate enough to become the

recipients. She was the matron of the ward to Cameron, nothing more; inflexible and business-like, with no particular interest in her vocation, but discharging her duties fairly enough, upon the whole.

In our female prisons, it may be readily imagined, there is a sprinkling of these hard, unsympathetic officers—good officers in the main, so far as discipline is concerned, but possessed of no tact with the women, unable after years of service to understand them, constantly exciting the prisoners by those little exhibitions of authority, which are according to rule, but which have been quietly "dropped" by the majority of their fellow-workers. Such matrons do more harm than good, gain but a sulky obedience from the well-behaved prisoners, and elicit passionate outbursts from the unruly. They are the Javerts of female prison life, making no effort to study the characters or the temperaments of their women, and keeping up a confusion in the wards that is inexplicable to the authorities. Orderly and precise matrons, but nothing more, they are like the orderly and precise mothers whom we meet with sometimes,

who regulate their children's lives on a similar principle, and whose children invariably turn out wrong—after all their trouble, all their care!

And if children with harsh mothers, or with mothers of the very opposite character, who have never a will to assert, go wrong—so those children of a larger growth, female convicts—but children in so many things—do not exhibit any great improvement when a strict disciplinarian, or an easy, foolish matron has the management of them. To hit the happy medium is the good fortune of not a few, however; experience will always teach the right way to a perceptive mind.

Jane Cameron's misfortune was to have for a second matron an inflexible and unsympathizing officer, and hence the ward fell into a little disorder; there were more reports flying about, and no mercy upon those prisoners' "fancies" which did harm to no one, and kept the evil thoughts away. The three months passed, and the inner door was allowed to remain open in the cell, but Cameron did not experience the advantage of it, for the matron reproved her more often through

the iron grating for inattention to her coir-picking and bag-making.

Finally, Jane Cameron became impressed with the idea—the worst idea that can take possession of a prisoner's mind—that she was slighted; that other prisoners were favoured by greater advantages and more frequent opportunities of change. She was let out for chapel-cleaning—a boon she highly prized, because it was honest hard labour in a new sphere, and took her away from work in her cell, but she never served the cocoa of a morning, or got to the kitchen under escort, or was allowed to dust and clean the matron's or sub-matron's rooms, or was even during the whole term of her stay constituted "tower-woman." She began to believe herself studiously and persistently slighted (which was a false belief enough), and to become dogged and morose in consequence. She thought that she had done her best to be noticed by her matron, and, failing in the object for which she had striven, she would just show them that "she was not to be put upon." One day she asked almost imperiously why she wasn't allowed "out" more often, and, upon receiving

a chilling reply, gave an insolent retort, and was reproved for her rudeness. I believe she lost her dinner, and was given bread and water for that minor offence, which was a second indignity, that hardened her heart for ever against her officer. From that time forth she hated her—took a savage satisfaction in shaking her clenched fist at her when her back was turned, or grimacing at her in the airing-yard. With the wickedness of a narrow mind, she once prayed—she had been taught to pray by this time—that sickness or an accident might befall her officer, and sweep her for ever from her path.

A prisoner is going wrong, progressing rapidly towards the penal class, when these thoughts take possession of her. The descent is swift; for there is no moral agent to counteract the false impression, and there is plenty of time to brood at Millbank, during the first six months of "solitary." Cameron brooded over the slights to which she had been subjected; of the advantages of others in the same ward. She told her grievances in the airing-yard, and the women said "It was a shame—a precious shame!"—and in their cases

they would not stand it. The woman next
her told her, as they marched round, that if sl
broke out, and "showed a sperrit," she would l
thought more of, and treated more considerately

"It's the very plucky ones the screws dor
like to put out too often," is the general id
amongst the convict class; and there is a certa
amount of truth in the assertion; for the "ve
plucky" will coolly go on to death's door, riskii
health, and even life, for a whim.

Cameron went back to her cell to dwell upo
the matter once more; to grow gradually, and
herself imperceptibly, more dogged and moros
The reader may ask what is the especial adva
tage of a "tower-woman," for instance, that Jar
Cameron should have fretted at being passe
over as ineligible for that post; and, as I ha
not alluded to it in "Female Life in Prison
a few remarks hereon may not be considered o
of place.

To be a tower-woman is an object of legit
mate ambition. She is a prisoner attendant
a certain extent on the tower-matron, and gener
servant, as it were, in the tower. There is

tower to every pentagon at Millbank, and therein the matrons breakfast, dine, and have tea. A well-behaved woman is always chosen from the solitary ward—never, that I remember, from an association cell, where the news of the prison would be talked over after work-hours.

A tower-woman is exempt from coir-picking, &c., and has more manual labour—a boon much coveted by female prisoners. And I pray this to be especially remembered by directors, that manual labour, movement of the body, sheer hard work, has always succeeded best with the female prisoners, and that the sedentary class is invariably the worst behaved. A kitchen-woman never breaks out; a shirt-maker, unless she be of delicate health, or possessed of more than a usual share of self-command, is sure to become a "refractory" at one period or another of her life.

The tower-woman, then, is released from her cell, and put on service in a tower from a quarter past six to eight, by which latter time the matron's bed is made, her room tidied, the breakfast ready

in the mess-room for the officers. At eight she is locked again in her cell, and the matrons sit down to breakfast, whilst the tower-matron patrols the wards. After the mess-room breakfast, the tower-woman is released again to wash up, clean knives for dinner, prepare the table for the twelve and one o'clock dinners of the two divisions of female officers in the pentagon. At dinner-time she is locked up once more; released in the afternoon to clear up and get tea ready. At tea-time she is dismissed for good; and the mess-room knives are carefully counted, to make sure of no abstractions on her part. This life is naturally to be envied by a prisoner. It is scarcely prison life; and the change of scene relieves the monotony. In old times—in my time—a favourite woman was kept as a tower-woman for months together, which, however satisfactory to the matron when possessed of a good servant, was unfair to the "solitaries," who were counting on their turn. I believe this rule has been altered, or an old rule more rigidly enforced, and that the women now change places once a fortnight.

Jane Cameron, deprived of a tower-woman's place, never allowed to dust a matron's room, suspected of being crafty, dishonest, dangerous—a natural suspicion enough, if any fragments of her past career had floated with her to her prison home—grew worse. Had she been trusted, had she been under a kind yet firm matron at that period, she would have shown some progress; but the matron simply considered her as an item in her list of black sheep; and the gentle words of the superintendent, and the efforts of the Rev. John Penny, then chaplain at Millbank, elicited no response from the better feelings which lay hidden deeply in this prisoner's heart. Cameron was a prisoner with a grievance; and she thought of that too much to give heed to the good words of higher officers. She saw the matron every day, but the chaplain and lady superintendent were but casual visitors to her cell; and the matron was "down upon her"—she could see that well enough.

The outburst came at length. A complaint of Cameron's that she considered satisfactory was passed over, forgotten, or treated lightly; and

Cameron, expressing another forcible opinion on the oversight, was a second time reported for insolence to her officer. Then followed a second forfeiture of dinner, a deprivation of her usual walk in the airing-ground, and Cameron sat down in her cell and cursed under her breath the officer who had reported her. That very afternoon a break-out occurred, and a removal to the dark; and Cameron, incited by example, began to reflect on seriously resisting the authorities.

She had become, naturally enough, perhaps, a more thoughtful woman, and even then she hesitated. When the cell door was closed, prayers had been said, and the gas put out, she arose and softly paced the limits of her cell in the darkness, until reflection vanished and a wild determination set in. She had been imposed upon, and was thought an easy woman, that would stand all manner of nonsense—she, Jane Cameron, who had been one of the worst of Glasgow girls! She gave up trying to be good; she could not stand remaining any longer quiet and passive; life was horrible; anything was preferable, for variety's sake. She laughed once

or twice at the sensation there would be created in the wards presently, when the officer was on night duty, and all was hushed and at rest.

She thought herself into a mad state—it is easy for a solitary woman to do this—and she regretted the absence of her broom, which had been given out according to rule when she had received her gruel supper in her "pint." When all was still, Cameron proceeded to tear her blankets and bedding; after the first rip or two, it became an easy and gratifying task; she began to sing over it after a while. Then she leaped on her table, and sprang up at the window, "pint" in hand, and hesitated. It was her first grave offence: should she do it, or should she not? She stood there and trembled for a while, then thought of her wrongs again, and of her fellow-convicts, who would laugh at her if she halted half way, and finally with a whirl of her hand she battered at the glass with her "pint," and screamed.

The deathlike stillness of the ward was over; the spell was broken; the matron came hurrying to the scene; the outer bell was rung for assistance; the prisoners turned out of their beds and

began hammering against the doors for information; one woman cried forth, "Bravo, Cameron! Give it 'em, my gal!" and another swore that, the next time she got a chance, Cameron had better look out, for waking her from her first sleep in that fool's way. "If you wanted to break out, why didn't you come it in the day-time?" she grumbled.

The excitement of entrenching on the stillness of her life, the quiescence of her daily existence, was now in full force; she was proud of the noise she had created, and of the attention she had drawn upon herself; she regretted the absence of more windows, and tried hard in the few minutes that intervened to break up her table for defensive purposes. And when the door was flung back by the male officers, she made a rush at them like a tigress, and fought them, scratched their faces, and tried to bite them, till, overpowered, she was borne away to the "dark."

In the dark cell she proceeded to stamp with her feet, beat the door with her hands, and scream after the approved convict fashion, until startled almost out of her life by a hoarse voice at her side:

"Give it 'em. I've screeched myself hoarse, and now it's your turn."

"Wha be ye?" cried Cameron.

"Hutchinson. I smashed yesterday; we're half on the smash, and they'll be obliged to fill in now. I thought some one had been here before. You're Cameron?"

"Ay."

"Thought you were a quiet un," was the observation; "no good being quiet in Millbank. I like a row, and I've *rowed* till I've lost my voice. I can kick still, though. Hoo! Hark here!"

And away went the heels of Hutchinson on the slanting wooden boards which formed, and still form, the place of rest for the "dark" inmates.

When the blankets and rug were passed in to Cameron, she tore them up after the usual fashion, and received hearty plaudits from her companion, who had torn hers to pieces at an earlier hour of the night.

"Keep it up, Cammie!" said the woman. "We'll do a song now. I'll sing; I've a beautiful voice. The screw sleeps above—*your* screw—and we'll keep her frisky."

The news was satisfactory to Cameron, who sang and kicked her heels during the rest of the night, or the early morning, in the hope that the uproar would reach from the cell to the ears of the matron above her. In the morning came bread and water, which Hutchinson accepted, being hungry, and which Cameron flung back at the matron through the trap. In the morning came news of the sentence: three days in the dark, with bread and water. But the dark was a change; there was no work for her, but she had found a companion, and they could talk together of the "bonnie days" when they were free. They compared experiences, took notes, told each other much of their respective lives, promised to consider themselves "pals" from that time forth, and to write to each other, passing the epistle on from hand to hand in the airing-ground or the chapel. When there was a chance they would break out together again, and perhaps be shut up together just as they were then.

But the six dark cells at the disposal of Government were cleared before twelve hours had passed, and Jane Cameron was suddenly removed to

another, parted from her new "pal," and left in the Cimmerian darkness of her new abode, without society, light, or work.

This was a startling change, which she bore for the first few hours, until the reaction set in, and the "horrors" came creeping towards her in the darkness. Naturally she was a nervous woman, for she was a superstitious woman, and dreaded the silence into which she had been suddenly plunged. For the first time she regretted the outbreak, and when the officer slid back the padded door, and looked through the trap at her, she asked for some work—something that she could do in the dark; oakum-picking she thought she could manage. When this was refused her, she took to singing again, then to walking up and down the cell, and counting one hundred, two hundred, three hundred turns; three hundred turns formed a task which tired her out a little, and if she fought hard, there was a chance of getting to sleep on the slanting boards, which reminded her so forcibly of the cells in the Glasgow police-station.

It became very agonizing and unendurable, and

the relief of the matron's visit, three times a day, not to mention the fugitive minutes passed with the chaplain and doctor, saved her, perhaps, from going mad. But oh! the long day and night, doing nothing but fighting against her own wild thoughts, and cursing the matron who had reported her and brought her to that pass! She nursed a revenge against that matron; it was pleasant to sit in the dark and plan schemes of attack upon her; she could bear anything to "pay her out." Then up and down again, and the sleep of a dog on the boards, where one could never sleep too long!

Two days yet to pass in the dark seemed an interminable period; the hours would never steal on and bring her nearer to the daylight. She found it better at last to cry, scream, beat her heels on the wooden bed, or practise a vigorous dance; it tired her out, and she could sleep better after it.

Her own impression was, that she really went mad during part of the time; that it was a happy idea to sing herself mad and lose all knowledge of time for a while. It was impossible to sit quietly and reflect. They were all gloomy thoughts which

possessed her; and if it were true about the devil, why, he might steal up and seize her whilst she was thinking of Glasgie! Finally, the term was up, and, very weak and ill, Jane Cameron trailed herself back to the cell and the bright light from which she had been excluded so long. The wooden door was closed upon her, and she began her solitary probation stage once more, after being informed by the governor that three grave offences of a similar character would add one more month to her sentence. This was a stern assertion, that had its effect upon her. Years and years belonged to her sentence: she was a "long-timed woman," whom even her fellow-prisoners pitied; but the addition of a month to her time chilled her with horror. One month more, after slaving all those years—it would kill her! She must be patient, and mind what she was about. Meanwhile let her be careful, and teaze her oakum in a contented manner!

CHAPTER III.

TRANSFER.

JANE CAMERON, bearing in remembrance the horrors of the dark cell, and having before her the prospect of a month's addition to her "time," resolved never to break out again. But the habit, once acquired, is difficult to relinquish, and the knowledge that the prisoner is on the list of "doubtfuls," and excluded from all small concessions, engenders a recklessness which eventually brings the woman into trouble.

Cameron broke out again in less than four weeks. She had recovered her strength; the closed door (sign of punishment for past offences) rendered her irritable. She was more prone to consider herself slighted than ever. The woman

in the next cell aggravated her by mimicking her Scotch accent in the airing-ground, and Hutchinson, her professed "pal," had not paid her any attention, or sent her one "stiff," * since her liberation. Moreover, she was with the matron whom she hated, and that officer was as cold, repellent, and unsparing as ever.

Cameron broke out, then. The windows looked tempting one day, the broom was handy this time, the coir-picking was aggravating, the "dark" was forgotten, and suddenly, and almost without a reason, Cameron went to work at her acts of demolition. The result we need not particularize —the dark cell was entered again, the same terrors beset her, the same regrets for the impulse which had brought her into disgrace—it is the old, old prison story appertaining to the latter days as to the past times of which I treat.

Cameron began to be looked upon as an "incorrigible" a penal-class woman, whom it was

* A *stiff*, as fully explained in the previous work of the author, is a secret missive, written upon paper illegally acquired—a gas paper, the fly-leaf of a book, &c.—and passed from one prisoner to another.

useless to think of taming—a "bad one," whom matrons were glad to transfer out of their particular wards, and concerning whose transfer little disputes possibly occurred in the mess-room. However, by degrees, Cameron passed through all her stages of probation—how, or in what manner, is not readily apparent—it is very probable that her stern persistence in "refractoriness," and her evidence of passionate impulse on all occasions, and for no apparent reason, induced a certain amount of consideration—a desire to study her a little more, and comment less rigidly on her minor offences. It is useless to disguise it, but a female prisoner can tire out her matron, and cause the rules to be relaxed a little in her favour. It is at the expense of her health, and after months, occasionally years, of rigour and unnatural defiance; but a matron will not always report an offence, if it be not too flagrant, when such a report leads to a break-out, which disturbs and unsettles a ward. The particular nature of that woman is studied more intently—it becomes on the part of the matron a compulsory kind of individualization.

And no harm follows the relaxation of discipline—on the contrary, much good. Singular and impulsive natures must not be kept too strictly to the rules; they are natures verging on the insane, and there are no rules to hold them in obedience. A careful matron can do much good with them; a stern or careless officer, much harm. All depends upon the warder's knowledge of character.

Cameron became better to a certain extent. When it was known that her disposition had become so sensitive that a reproof would lead to a "break-out," and a kind word stop one, the kind word was used more often, and with a beneficial effect. She grew more quiet. The door of her cell was opened again; she passed therefrom as a kitchen-woman and chapel-cleaner, and found consolation and an expenditure of superfluous energy in hard work. Hard work was her safety-valve, and reports became less in consequence. Now and then the fit would come, despite her own efforts at self-control—she tried to keep quiet at last—and, in the face of her own conviction of the foolishness and wickedness

of her acts, the glass shivered, and the blankets were again torn into strips.

She found her way into association, where she became a better, almost a well-conducted, woman. This, at first sight, tells against my own idea, mentioned in the preceding Part—that the solitary system is good, and the association system bad—not bad for the spirits of the prisoner, but for her morals. The solitary system, "with the difference" to which I have already alluded, has not been tried yet in our Government establishments, and association with prisoners is certainly better than keeping a woman entirely alone.

In association, Cameron improved in conduct, then. In association, she could talk of old times, hear stories of English criminal life, find much to distract her thoughts from brooding over slights and indignities. Besides, there was an incentive to remain quiet—three months in association without a report qualified her for Brixton Prison, and being so near a change was an inducement to try hard to deserve it. She was close on an outbreak, however, in the Association Ward: one of the women had known Black

Barney, and, according to her own confession, had been a very great favourite of his. The two prisoners quarrelled over the merits and demerits of this vagabond, and would probably have fallen to blows, had not Cameron wisely sought to bring about a change of partners. She was near Brixton, and trying hard to keep her passions down.

The association-cells at Millbank are on a large scale, and accommodate three prisoners together day and night, each prisoner sleeping in a separate bed. This is an association preferred to the Brixton fashion by the women, and is allowed, I should say, more on account of the limited space at command than on any principle that appears rational. At Brixton there is association at the doors and in the work-rooms, but the prisoners are in separate cells during the night.

Cameron, dissatisfied with one of her companions, and anxious "to keep good" now she had gone so far, detailed the state of her case to the matron of her ward:

"Miss ——, I want to be put in anither cell, or hae Jones ta'en awa'."

"How's that, Cameron?"

"She makes fun o' me, and I shall hae to ficht her. I'm doin my vera best noo, but I canna keep my fists frae her ugly face gin she keeps on in sic a fule's wa'."

The matron promised to make a change, but, in the turmoil of her strange business, forgot Cameron's complaint.

The next day, Cameron gave a second warning.

"I'm clean warked up noo, Miss ——. I'll gae bock to solitary, or I'll smash her! Which is it to be?"

This was decisive, and the matron found means to effect an alteration at once. Jones changed places with another prisoner in an association-cell, and the course of prison life ran on smoothly again.

Cameron earned her licence to be transferred. She passed through her three months in association, and was complimented by the matron on her rapid improvement in behaviour. This pleased Cameron, to the end of her term very impressionable to kind words, and treasuring them. And when the lady-superintendent made

a similar remark, and trusted that she would continue to amend, Cameron's eyes filled with tears, and she thought in her heart that it was not impossible to be a better prisoner for the future.

She was an old prisoner, then; dead to religious impressions, as it seemed; hypocritical to a certain extent, as are all prisoners; hopeless of ever doing well in life, or of being anything better than a thief! It was convenient to say that she was sorry for her past offences—it pleased the chaplain, who looked in upon her occasionally; but she shrugged her shoulders in her cell, and wondered how else it could have happened. In time she would go back to Glasgie, and the old life must begin again: she thought of nothing better for herself in the future. She even pined for the old life in her heart. Thinking too much of what they were doing in Glasgie, how happy they all were without her, and how bright the streets must look there, had been the cause of more than one break-out, which had been set down to sheer wantonness of conduct by her officers.

Still that life was too far away to build upon

yet awhile, and in the interim she hoped it was possible to behave more decorously, and earn a fairer reputation at Brixton than she had done at Millbank.

She went away to Brixton Prison with that hope. The omnibus took her and a score of "eligibles" away from Millbank, and once more there was the fleeting vision of house-rows, broad roads, and pathways teeming with life—a something to think about when the key turned in the lock again—a glimpse of liberty that bedazzled this strange woman, and subdued her into tears at its brightness and its unapproachableness.

CHAPTER IV.

OSCILLATION.

THERE are "prison characters" on whom no amount of concession exercises any effect; who are blind to the advantages derivable from good conduct, preferring to have their own wild way, and subject themselves to all possible punishments, to enjoying the light rules at Brixton or Fulham —women utterly reckless, to whom a penal-class ward seems preferable to association—defiant and dangerous at all times and seasons—passing swiftly back to Millbank and stricter coercion, finishing, in many instances, their term out at the latter prison, and debarred from any claim to those establishments where a milder system prevails.

Jane Cameron, at her worst, was not of this description of convicts. She had the ill reputation of being a passionate and even an untrustworthy prisoner, but she did not break out on system, and there *was* good in her, which awaited the right method of educing it.

A prisoner will pass through years of penal servitude without meeting with the *accident*—if we dare call it accident—which changes and remodels her; gloomy, morose, under suspicion, outwardly a hopeless character, whose heart there is no touching; and then a chance word, like a ray of light, or a touch from the spear of Ithuriel, bringing the better feelings uppermost, and altering that woman for all time. A chaplain, a matron, should never despair of this; there will be manifold disappointments, but here and there, as a return for their labour in God's cause, the hard nature will soften, and the new life give forth its first shoot.

Let the reader not understand, from these remarks, that Jane Cameron ever became a model character, or that her repentance was very great and intense. She altered, she even repented of

her past sinful career, but she was ever a weak woman—more of a child than a woman—and, if she offers no very striking example, still she remains an example that I have considered worth producing. There were turning-points of her career when she wavered and almost sank; she became a good woman rather than a good Christian; the truths and depths of religion, I do not believe that she ever thoroughly understood.

But let it be said of her that she learned to see the wickedness of her past career, and that she made the effort to break away from it for ever. If that effort were not maintained throughout with persistence—and there were times when the great Tempter verged again upon a mastery—still the effort was made, and the fight was kept up to the end.

Jane Cameron was wise enough to see the advantages of Brixton Prison over Millbank, and to make up her mind to remain at the former establishment, if possible. Here, at Brixton, were longer periods of exercise in the airing-ground, chances of promotion to Badge No. 1, tea-drinking and association permitted, and other

advantages, which it would be tedious recapitulation on my part to recall attention to in this book.

Cameron did not arrive with a first-class character from Millbank, it is needless to assert, and therefore took up her position in the old prison, generally reserved for third-class women, whose gratuity is fourpence a week, whose association is reserved to the latter part of the day, and on Sundays all day, chapel-time excepted. She arrived with a No. 3 Badge, but had served three months out of four, as a well-behaved third-class woman; consequently, there remained but one more month for service to transfer her to the East Wing, where she would become a No. 2 woman, earn sixpence in lieu of fourpence, and have tea three times a week. And after that, why, it would be easy to become a No. 1 woman—why should she not, as well as the rest of them?

We need not dwell upon the minor incidents in Cameron's life for a while. Time went on; Cameron gained the No. 2 Badge, and was duly installed in the East Wing. Here was association; and, unfortunately, association with a prisoner of a temperament the reverse of satisfactory, who upset

all Cameron's good resolutions, and caused a break-out, even a fight, all the more desperate for the long restraint to which she had subjected herself.

Then followed experience in the dark cells at Brixton, and after a while the sudden appearance of the matron, accompanied by a male officer, in the refractory quarters.

"Cameron, you're wanted."

"Wha wants me?"

"It's the superintendent, I think," was the evasive reply.

The door was unlocked, and Cameron, wondering at the result—it was her first "break-out" at Brixton—followed her matron from the dark cells, through the kitchen to the "furnace-room" of the prison.

"Whar's the lady superintendent?"

"In the office—you're to change your dress for clean things here."

"What for?"

"You're going back to Millbank!"

Cameron's heart sank. She had had a suspicion of that fact, but hoped against hope as she

followed the matron and officer to those quarters whence all the women had been removed.

"Wull" (assuming her defiant manner), "*I* dinna care for that!"

The male officer retired, and mounted guard outside the door. Cameron dressed herself very moodily, muttering once or twice, "I dinna care," as though to keep her courage from sinking.

"Well, Cameron," said the matron at this juncture, "I'm sorry you're going away. I thought you would have behaved well here."

"It was a' that wooman," said she; "na my fault at a'."

And Cameron, touched by the matron's assertion, plunged her knuckles into her eyes to keep her tears back, finally burst forth with—

"Oh! it's hard. If I might ony stop noo."

"Behave well at Millbank, and you'll soon be back again, Cameron."

"Am I to gang awa' at ance?"

"They're waiting for you now."

Cameron dressed herself in her clean things, and was escorted to the conveyance awaiting her —and then away through the streets again to Millbank Prison, where the same reception met her as

on the first occasion—the heart-chilling process of hair-cutting, the tepid bath, the removal to solitary quarters.

"It wa' awfu' sudden like. If I'd kenned I'd hae to gang back, I would hae tried vera hard to stay."

The prisoners at Brixton are never apprised of the order for their removal until the last minute, and, before the full force of the sentence of banishment presses upon them, they are rattled away to the old Millbank quarters, there to try again, by good conduct, to deserve a re-transfer. Eight months at Brixton, and then back again to spend her time in the old fashion! She was sorry to return to Millbank. Though she had been undemonstrative at Brixton—more silent and thoughtful than her wont was—yet she had liked the place; seen, with a woman's keen perception, the kindness and thoughtfulness of the superintendent, and been more than once touched by them. Honour to that lady superintendent, who has won so many hearts of prisoners and matrons in her time, who has ever had a good word for the governing members and the governed, and who is still exercising her kind and beneficial sway at

the Surrey Prison! If she read this book—whic is possible—will she take to heart this assertic of the writer, that those matrons who have serv under her, and who have passed from her sphe to new worlds, often call to mind that kindne for them, and that sympathy with them, whi rendered their hearts, as well as their labou more light! Apart from her, they still hold h memory green!

Cameron spent a few months at Millban when an incident occurred to which it is nece sary to allude before we follow her to Brixt Prison once more.

CHAPTER V.

"PALLING IN."

JANE CAMERON began life again at Millbank Prison—the Probation Ward, with the cell door closed before the iron grating, and the coir-picking—insufferable, wearisome, monotonous coir-picking—once again resumed. Still it was not for a long period, and in four months' time—perhaps less—it was possible to be re-eligible for Brixton. Cameron, taught a lesson by this sudden return to Millbank, resolved to fight hard against the temptations to "break out;" she was a prisoner who had good impulses at times, and was not wholly desperate.

Cameron's door was soon open, and this first sign of being considered deserving of some

concession, encouraged her once more to persevere. She behaved well, and was very shortly let out as chapel-cleaner, and occasionally as kitchen-woman.

In the kitchen one Saturday morning, she met with a woman whom I will call Susan Marsh; a new prisoner—young, pretty, and designing. This woman was not more than seventeen years of age, and had been in prison three or four times previously. She bore a fair character already for attention to the prison duties, moved briskly about her tasks, appeared attentive to the chaplain and respectful to her officers: a woman inordinately vain, who had a horror of breaking out—who was of delicate health, and quiet habits—a prison character to be trusted, so far as obedience was concerned—a prisoner who gave no trouble; therefore one of the best class, in a certain sense of the word.

Susan Marsh took a fancy to Jane Cameron—one of those strange fancies to which I have already alluded in this work and elsewhere, and which no vigilance of officers can wholly stop. Matrons are keenly alive to the danger of "palling in," and the quarrels it engenders amongst the

women; but "palling in" is as fashionable still in our prisons as it was when Cameron was on probation at Millbank.

Cameron and Marsh exchanged a word or two in the kitchen; at chapel the next day, Cameron was conscious of Marsh watching her during the service, and smiling at her in a sisterly way. Cameron had not met with a smile since her incarceration, and the chance of having a friend, *some one to think about*, some one who would think about *her*, bewildered her, and gave a new turn to her thoughts. It was a turn in the wrong direction, but she saw no harm in it—it was a novel excitement, and relieved the monotony.

If she had known at that time that this woman was to be the evil genius of her life—of her pure life advancing from the distance, she might have paused and turned away from her. But she *fell in love* with this woman; I know no phrase that can more truly convey my meaning. And women do fall in love with each other in prisons; exhibit for each other at times strange passionate and unselfish attachments, lasting, as a rule, nine or twelve months, and then ending in a whirl of rage

and jealousy, a desperate quarrel, and a new "pal." I have known one woman leave her baby to a stranger's care, and fight her way to the dark, where she knew her "pal" was confined.

Cameron and Marsh became "pals." It was all arranged between them in the usual fashion—the letter was written by Marsh, and carried in her hair till a chance presented itself of passing it on. The letter went from hand to hand in the airing-yard, and reached Cameron, who found means to steal pen, ink, and paper, and return a reply, as well as her powers—still defective after all this prison schooling—would permit. From that time forth "pals;" to fight for each other when occasion required it, and whilst the fit lasted; to take every opportunity of launching forth crab-bed, ill-spelt "stiffs," conveying the little news that was at command: how Jane had a headache, or Susan was far from well—how "this came hoping," and "I must now conclude with my dearest love," &c.

Marsh had seven months to serve before eligible for Brixton; Cameron, in her anxiety to show her devotion, committed those minor offences which

put back her time of removal. Brixton possessed no inducement for her whilst the "new love" remained at Millbank. After all, Cameron counted her term incorrectly; or Marsh's removal, for reasons not known to the prisoner, was postponed for a while. The omnibus took Cameron to Brixton in due course, but the "pal" was left behind, much to the chagrin of Cameron, whose first idea was to break out, in order to return to Millbank.

Second thoughts were best in this instance; she believed that Marsh would soon follow her, and that to return to Millbank would be to lose her for a long period. She had heard a terrible story of women serving out their whole time at Millbank, when pronounced "incorrigible" by the Director. That was a story with a moral to it.

In a very little time, Susan Marsh followed her to Brixton Prison, and took up her place in the same ward, which spoiled the romance of the thing; half the excitement lying in the difficulties of seeing and corresponding with each other. However, they still remained "pals," and if Susan Marsh's affection appeared to diminish

somewhat, Jane Cameron's at least increased in intensity—to so strong a pitch of intensity, that prison duties became neglected, and she did not rise so rapidly to No. 2 as in the days of her first arrival. She became unhappy, and jealous of some smiles and nods between Marsh and a girl appertaining to the East Wing; finally, took to fretting about Marsh, and was discovered one night wiping her eyes industriously by the assistant matron of the ward, who chanced to look through the inspection at her.

"Cameron, what's the matter?"

Since her return, Cameron had not taken any notice of this matron, who was somewhat new to the service. The voice through the inspection startled Jane, who looked moodily back towards the speaker.

"Naethin' be the matter wi' me."

"You have been crying—you have not been well lately. Have any of the women offended you? Is anything wrong with the work?"

"What if there be, Miss?"

"Perhaps we can alter it. We don't want you to break out."

"Would ye care aboot my breaking oot?"

"A great deal."

"Wull—I mean to break oot!"

Cameron spoke very decisively; a brooding fit had set in, and all the old bad tempers had returned to her. She was verging on the desperate, when this new, kind voice startled her.

"I hope not, Cameron."

"For your ain sake, Miss—or for mine?"

"For mine a little—but for your own a great deal."

Cameron shook her head dubiously. She did not believe that. Still she was curious: this was a singular officer, whose ways she did not comprehend, and the assertion was strange and impressive. She spoke differently to other matrons, and her interest startled her.

"My ain sake!" she repeated, scornfully.

"You'll go back, perhaps, to Millbank, and I'm thinking of making a good woman out of you."

"I've ne'er been gude in a' my leef—I'm too auld ever to be gude noo."

"I don't believe it," was the cheering answer.

"I've hope in you, Cameron. Come, say that you will not break out to-night."

"To please ye!"

"Yes."

"*Wull, to please ye, then.*"

"Good night!"

"Gude nicht!"

This was a long conversation—even against the rules, to a certain extent—the hour being past six, when the old prison cells are supposed to be locked up for the night. Cameron was surprised at this long talk, sat down to think of it, and got out of her head, for that night, at least, her suspicions of Susan Marsh's backsliding. The matrons had spoken kindly to her before, but never in that fashion. No one had ever spoken to her in that way, in all her life. It was very "funny," but it was very kind. It was not like "salving her ower," as she was inclined to term it; and the matron's interest in her—*in her, too*!—perplexed her.

She felt very happy after that. She was a child proud of the attention that had been directed

to herself—she could understand the matron better than the parson, good man as he was.

Thus was the first seed sown in this disturbed nature, which no hand out of prison had ever attempted to set straight. No one guessed it at the time, not even Jane Cameron herself. The matron had stopped a break-out, and was pleased at the promise she had extorted from Cameron—she was not too old for prison service, and her interest in her flock was intense. It was not machine work with her yet; she had sanguine dreams of promotion, and was doing her best, her very best, for the service which she had entered—which years ago, in the "better days," she had never dreamed of entering.

Shall I write her down a visionary, with exalted ideas of the good that might be effected by tact and discretion in prison life—I especially, who have been a prison matron like unto her, and whose heart may not have been so set on my work?

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CHAPTER VI.

MATRON AND PRISONER.

I TRUST I may venture to assert here, without fear of contradiction, that a prison matron has occasionally her favourite prisoner. It is seldom, if ever acknowledged; it is well disguised from the general body of women; a matron here and there may guess at it, the superintendent and the deputy have no consciousness of the fact.

But there are favourites even in a prison, just as there are favourite boys for whom the schoolmaster has preferences, or a favourite son or daughter to whom the heart of the mother may almost unconsciously lean.

No injustice is done to the rest of the class or the family, but in the favoured one appears some

traits different to the rest—more affection, reverence, docility—a something that inclines the greater share of love to *that one*! Amongst prisoners, it often happens that there is a something in a woman that awakens a greater share of interest, though the secret is kept well, and not always perceived by the object of attraction.

This matron—it will save trouble if I christen her Miss Weston—took an interest in Jane Cameron. It interfered not with her duties: it neglected not other women in her charge; but it existed. The dialogue which had impressed Jane Cameron, had had also its effect on the matron. She had noted the look of surprise, the joyful surprise at Cameron believing anyone could possess an interest in her, the eagerness with which she listened to every word, and the gratitude that lurked in the "gude nicht!" which had concluded the dialogue. After that Miss Weston noticed Cameron more; became gradually impressed with the conviction that here was one woman whom care and womanly tact might save from herself—might save, God willing, from the darkness whence her life had sprung. She made inquiries concerning her, and

learned that she was a woman not to be trusted—ignorant, passionate, violent—everything (*that was bad*) by turns, and nothing long. This braced her energies to try what she could do—if she failed she need say nothing, and no one would be the wiser, but if she succeeded in bringing this one poor weak sinner to repentance, what a glorious victory for her!

She was a thoughtful and a religious woman, but not an enthusiast. Of an undemonstrative nature, she gave no evidence of the interest at her heart, in the new and arduous task she had set herself. Calmly and methodically she went about her prison duties, and bided her time for the impression which she desired to convey.

Her "bed-room woman" at this period passed over to the wing, and she obtained permission from the deputy-superintendent to select Cameron in her stead. There was considerable hesitation, at first, on the part of the deputy: "Cameron was not the best woman in the ward."

"She has improved very much," said Miss Weston; "I think she has made up her mind to amend."

"'Well, try her."

So Jane Cameron was constituted "bed-room woman" to Miss Weston; that is, the prisoner who arranges and dusts the matron's or assistant matron's room, makes the bed, &c. before the clock in the yard tolls forth seven in the morning—Saturdays excepted, when the period is extended till twelve o'clock, to allow for scrubbing the floor, and extra cleaning, &c. This was a change—a rise in life—Jane Cameron, for the first time, was to be trusted! It bewildered her very much. Susan Marsh was not an object of so much distraction—if her "pal" put her out, she must not resent the affront by an outbreak, or she would lose caste, and the privilege conceded would pass away from her, perhaps never to return.

To the matron she was very grateful and reverent—her heart was too full for thanks; she was too bashful to thank her—this professional thief confessed afterwards that she was "TOO BASHFUL!" She did not know how to thank her, save by her faithfulness and obedience, and she was faithful and obedient to the last. She went about the prison ward with a lighter step; her eyes were

brighter, there was a smile now often on face.

The second or third day an incident occu The matron coming back suddenly to her found Cameron leaning her elbow on the ma piece, and looking sternly and fixedly at money—a sovereign and a few shillings, that been accidentally left about.

"Ye hae done this to try me, I suppose?"

"Done what, Cameron?"

"Left a' this gould and siller here. Ye na hae done it, I'm thinking."

"Cameron, I never thought of such a th was the reply, "it's my own wicked carelessn

"Why wicked?"

"Because it is putting temptation in way."

"It dinna tempt me!" she cried with a that was touching; "ye hae been kind to me, —Miss Weston," she corrected—"and d'ye I'm bad eno' to tak that?"

"No, I do not, or I should not have aske you to be made my 'bed-room woman.'"

"Why did ye ask?"

"Because I felt that I could trust you—that you would do well."

"Sae I will."

"Please God."

"Please ye," was the strange, irreverent answer.

Jane Cameron did her duties well: it became necessary to promote her to No. 2—to pass her over to the East Wing, a reward of merit for patient service. This distressed Cameron—change of faces, of friends, was undesirable now—she would have liked to live for ever as No. 3 woman, she thought.

"Miss Weston, I want to spak to ye," she said one afternoon to her matron.

The matron entered her cell and asked what she had to communicate.

"I've my No. 2 badge, ye see. I'm to gang o'er to the wing the next vacancy, and I dinna want."

"Not want to be promoted, Cameron?"

"Na."

After a little hesitation, she said—

"I wish to stap here—wi' ye. If they send me over I shall break oot to coom bock to ye."

"No, don't do that," cried the alarmed matron, "that would be very wrong. In the wing, you will be much happier, Cameron."

"I ken what the wing is, weel enoo."

There was a doggedness in Cameron's looks that was symbolical of her intention to keep her threat, and the matron exerted her powers of argument to shake the stern resolution which the prisoner had formed. The matron was at last successful;—Cameron suffered when Miss Weston spoke of the sorrow she should experience at the sad news of Cameron's outbreak, of the confidence she should lose in her for ever—she who had confidence now!

"Well, I'll do my best, Miss."

"Some of these days I may be transferred to the wing, Cameron."

Cameron brightened up at this—that idea had not suggested itself before.

"Then I'll try to wait for ye—and ye will na forget me althegither; ye'll think o' me noo and then?"

"To be sure. Think of you getting on to be a No. 1 woman, Cameron."

"Ay."

Still the woman regretted her departure from the old prison; she fretted about it in her cell and over her work—a glance through the inspection found her more than once with her elbows on the table and her hands supporting her chin, staring fixedly at the opposite wall. The change troubled her—harassed her—she fought against the sorrow of losing the one friendly face, and fought well for so ill-trained and impulsive a prisoner.

She was removed suddenly—passed to the wing one morning after chapel-time without any formal notice, locked up in her new cell, and not a chance afforded her of bidding Miss Weston good-bye!

In her new cell, under the new matron, she tried to do her best. The matron of her ward was kind enough, but it was not the matron to whom she had taken so sudden a liking—not the matron who understood her and her ways. She was discontented and low-spirited, but, remembering her promise, she did her best to keep strong, and fulfil her allotted tasks.

"She'll come some day!" was Cameron's consolation. But the days passed on, no changes occurred in the prison, and the "pal"—Susan Marsh—by her eccentric fits of attachment for her, and indifference to her, kept her restless Susan Marsh was in a ward apart from Cameron and therefore distance lending enchantment to the view, affection—or that which may stand for it in a prison, and between prisoners—revived at this period, and "stiffs" passed between them without much, if any, regard for the rules. Cameron felt that she really liked Susan Marsh—there was look in her face that reminded her of the Mary Loggie of the Glasgie days—but the liking was of a different character to that which she experienced for the matron of the old prison ward. Cameron continued to improve—there was chance of getting the No. 1 Badge, but the thought of what "Miss Weston would think that," made her more anxious to earn the additional honour, than the emoluments and extra favours which appertained to the distinction. The good chaplain of Brixton encouraged her also in

his kind words to persevere, and all seemed fair sailing with the Scotch girl.

The dark hour came at length. Another arrival from the old prison communicated a variety of news from the wards she had quitted. She had been a woman of Miss Weston's ward, and could tell Cameron, in association-hour, who was Miss Weston's bed-room woman now, and how Miss Weston was getting on.

The new arrival was loquacious, and the reverse of truthful. She was a shrewd prisoner, who saw how the land lay in an instant, and she told a few anecdotes of Miss Weston and the favourites she had now, which sadly perplexed poor Cameron.

If Miss Weston had a favourite, *she* was forgotten—she who had set herself down for a favourite with that matron, at least. She must go back and see for herself—she could not stop there any longer—her No. 1 Badge was no temptation to her after that.

The next day she was insolent to her matron—was reported—taken to the superintendent's

office in charge of the principal and a male
The case was heard and adjudicated upo
Cameron's badge was taken from her, and
transferred to the old prison.

But here she reckoned without her hos
one miscalculation threw her plans out. Ca
was put in a new ward, and was as muc
from Miss Weston as ever. She saw her c
twice during exercise-hour—a passing gl
that was some recompense for all her troub
self-sacrifice.

She met the sad look of the old matron
passed her for the first time.

"I thocht I should like to coom back for
bit," she murmured, as she passed and
at the matron's skirt for a moment; "din
crass wi' me!"

CHAPTER VII.

MORAL PROGRESS.

Owing to changes in Brixton Prison, retirement of old officers, and arrival of new ones on probation, Miss Weston was transferred to the West Wing, and placed farther apart than ever from Jane Cameron. The news reached Cameron in the usual mysterious and rapid fashion common to the circulation of news in prison, and Cameron, after much reflection, resolved to work her way, if it were possible, to a No. 1 Badge. If she were successful in keeping her bad tempers down, if she attended to her work and thought less of the minor troubles of prison life, she might attain to the position of a No. 1 woman as well as others who had been once as bad as herself.

Her strange attachment, almost devotion, for Miss Weston, nerved her to her task, and Cameron, to the surprise of the officials, turned over a new leaf, and went to work afresh.

And in the course of a few months her efforts were rewarded by her attaining to the dignity of a No. 1 Badge, and fortune being more favourable to her this time, she was installed in that very ward to which Miss Weston, at that period, belonged. Here was the acme of prison felicity; a No. 1 Badge stitched on a *green* dress, eightpence a week gratuity, tea every day, more association, more exercise in the airing-ground, and above all, and before all, Miss Weston for ward officer!

She was well fed and clothed; there was a good bed to lie on, and in Glasgow she had never known such comfort as *that*, had never sought for it, when there was money at her disposal to procure it. If she were not contented with prison life, she was at least resigned to it, and could appreciate to a certain extent its advantages. She looked eagerly forward to the days of her liberty, but she did not repine at the fate which

kept the long years between her and freedom. She made the best of her bargain, and became a good prisoner—hasty in her manner at times, and never even of the very best—but still one over whom a careful matron could exercise control.

This was the first improvement—the second came slowly but surely to the light. Miss Weston and Cameron had never touched on religious topics in the few fleeting moments of each day when words could be exchanged—when Cameron was a store-cell woman, for instance, and there were opportunities for a few remarks on past and present matters. (A store-cell woman, I may say here, is a woman chosen from the general body, to attend to the stores under the matron's superintendence, to check off the soap, bath brick, gas papers, &c.)

Religious topics are very properly left to the chaplain—in fact, topics of any length, or on any subject, are considered out of rule, and conversation between matrons and prisoners is not "in the books." Still conversations will ensue over the stores, in the laundry, in the infirmary, and kitchen; and, when the matron is a woman of

tact and good feeling, many powerful impressions are made upon the prisoners. A chance phrase, the right word falling at the right time on the heart that has been touched by a kindness, often lead to a new train of thought in the prisoner, and add a brightness to her life. But conversations are very properly forbidden; no system has been thought of yet, and that familiarity which breeds contempt would only ensue, if, under the present order of things, too much talking was overlooked. She will pardon me for writing this, but I do not even assert that Miss Weston was a model matron. She did not keep to the rules of the prison, and, although there was always a fair motive actuating her deviation therefrom, yet she would have established a bad precedent, had her erratic course of government been generally known by her sister matrons.

Still she was a thoughtful woman, and, in her case, good evolved from her deviation from the strict letter of the law. She was a woman of moderate, I may even say good education, had some knowledge of character, and possessed, without its ever being particularly remarked, a

deep religious feeling. She had entered the prison, hoping in her heart that she might be able to do some good in her time; and if there lay a chance in her way, it was not, in her opinion, to be neglected because a rule of the prison—something more honoured in the breach than the observance—stood between it and her motives. In my time, she was even a critic of the Government under which she held office, and had Colonel Sir Joshua Jebb or Captain O'Brien condescended to have solicited her opinion upon many requirements of the prison service, it is just possible that her practical opinions would have shaken their faith in the wisdom of a few of the "Rules."

Lest any suspicious reader should incline to the belief that the writer of this book is the Miss Weston alluded to, let me, in this place, disabuse him of the idea. I am not Miss Weston, although from that young lady, now apart from Government service, I have gleaned much matter for this history. Miss Weston was not a model matron, but she would have

made an excellent superintendent, had she b fortunate enough to rise from the ranks.

Miss Weston and Cameron verged upon r gious topics one day. Cameron had been spe ing of Glasgow life—of the old times, when was a marked woman in the streets.

"Have you ever thought of your future when you leave here, Cameron?"

She hesitated.

"Na," she answered at length.

"You don't think of going back?"

"I—— I kenna what I shall do," she said.

"Do anything, be anything, rather than be the old dreadful life. You must try to b better woman after this."

"I'll try," was the moody answer.

"You have heard of the Discharged Prison Aid Society?"

"Ah! I hae heard o' it," was the ansv "It's na fit for the like o' me. I," with a sh hard laugh, "could na begin service at my ti o' leef."

"Then you'll go back to ruin, body and s

Oh! Cameron, don't you ever pray to be kept away from temptation?"

"I hae been taught to pray here a wee bit. It's too late, I fancy. It dinna do any gude."

"Because you don't pray with your whole heart; because you're not sorry for all the past evil."

"Yes, I am," was the quick reply. "I'm sorry; but it could na be helped. How could it be a' helped, brought up like meesel wa'?"

"By trying to repent. You never repented—never thought, Cameron."

"That's true eno'!"

"But you have been taught to think now. You will have no excuse to go back and sin deliberately again."

"I ne'er said I was ganging bock to sin, Miss," was the answer.

A prisoner will never confess this—the most defiant and hardened of female convicts will never allow this. They are going home—to the old haunts, where the past temptations will return to them in tenfold force for the long restraint that has been exercised; they are going to meet

the old companions and enter upon the old scenes—but they are not returning to theft and debauchery! They are all too ready to confess to repentance—to the better life which they will begin from the time that sets no high walls between them and freedom.

Miss Weston had hope of Cameron from the evidence of gloom which hung over her; Cameron did not own to a return unto unrighteousness, but the future was rendering her unsettled. Cameron saw the prison again beyond that life which would be hers when her time was up, and a glimpse of a new world had touched her heart somewhat. In association, some of the best prisoners talk about the "Home," as the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society is termed. They who intend proceeding there, if the chance present itself, talk of its advantages, of the new road which leads thence—hard, stony, and uphill—but still the road which leads to honest folks' respect, and on which is the brightness of God's heaven.

Cameron became thoughtful and confused—her health had degenerated with her prison life—the chaplain had been kind and earnest with her;

once or twice the thoughts of death in prison had startled her, and she had learned the old lesson, first taught in Glasgow Gaol, of what the end would be of such a life as hers—a life that had never sought its Saviour, or recoiled from all the guilt by which it had been shadowed.

At this time—at the best of times for Cameron—she gave way, and was removed for a while to the infirmary. Miss Weston lost sight of her, but the chaplain was with her still, and the Bible was at her elbow; she had learned to read, and even become curious concerning the Scriptures. She was a patient invalid, and lay in her bed spelling over one or two texts which had been indicated as applicable to her position and her better thoughts—texts which spoke of forgiveness to the sinner that repenteth, even at the eleventh hour.

In those days of sickness; Cameron was, possibly, at her best. The old life receded farther away into the darkness, and it scarcely seemed to appertain to her any longer. She could shudder at it, and all the evil that had characterized it—there was no longer any temptation in the

Glasgow streets for her; she estimated the evil of her past associates, and thought even with a shudder of Black Barney. If she could keep away from them all for ever, she might, if she were spared, begin a different life. She prayed with her whole heart to be forgiven now, for that life to be spared, for the one chance to become a different woman. It had never been offered her yet—if it only lay before her, just for once, to try what she could do in the future by patience, perseverance, and prayer.

When she got better, she did not forget all her new thoughts, all her new hopes. If she fell back somewhat into the *prisoner*—which was but natural—still she fell not utterly away from right again she became with every day more impressionable.

She was a woman who seldom alluded to religious subjects; she spoke more often of getting a servant's place when her time was up, and of leading a sober life rather than a religious one. But she had resolved to make an effort to amend, and the signs of the resolve being genuine, were visible in her greater obedience to orders, her deeper thoughtfulness, her studied attempts to

win the good words of those in authority above her.

No penitent of the exemplary kind, but a weak woman struggling upwards from the shadow-land; falling back a step or two, and striving once more to gain her old position—only a woman trying to be good, and hoping, by God's help, to become a good woman in time.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SLIGHT RELAPSE.

JANE CAMERON never entirely regained her old strength. The prison air was against her. Though she had lived an irregular life, and sown the seeds of disease in a constitution not naturally strong, she had experienced but little illness, until a long sentence brought her to Millbank and Brixton. Then by degrees, and despite of constant attention and early hours, her health gave way somewhat—took her as we have seen, in one instance, to infirmary quarters. Long-sentenced prisoners invariably require great care; the result of their erratic courses begins to evidence itself, when all the wild excitement of the past is shut away from them. Then the prison air and confine-

ment to these poor women, who have had the liberty and license of wild beasts, sap at their strength, and a few at least give way under the restraint.

We must feed our prisoners well, or kill them. I do not believe that a "long-timed" convict could exist on workhouse diet—in the prison air is a something enervating and insidious, which the authorities must fight against with good food, good air, and regular exercise.

Cameron was never a strong prisoner, although I believe she never wholly fell back in her health again at Brixton Prison. She was a woman who kept back her ailments, and was undemonstrative concerning them, which is a remarkable characteristic of our sex, out of prison as well as in.

In the West Wing, Cameron had a reason for this, and often maintained that she was well, when a statement of her feelings would have secured her rest, and extra privileges in the infirmary. Miss Weston remained in the wing, and Cameron's devotion to her continued to increase.

These prisoners' affections for certain matrons are not rare, and stand, perhaps, as evidence of

the better nature, which still makes an effort to assert itself. Most of the matrons of our Government prisons—certainly all the best of that industrious community—can remember one or two women in their time, possibly women bearing the worst characters, and seemingly to others the most untameable, who would have almost laid down their lives for them, had it been necessary. As a rule, I think I may add, these prisoners are always women who have never experienced kindness from others, who have never known the comforts of a home, and who enter prison stupefied, as it were, by an appalling ignorance; yet these women, whom it appears impossible to teach, who, during years of penal servitude, understand nothing and will learn nothing, who have the cunning and ferocity of the tigress, become suddenly susceptible to a kind word, a smile, an exhibition of interest in them, and turn to the favourite matron with a fierce impetuousness, which is akin to love.

I have seen women who have rejected every good word of the chaplain, who have scoffed at him to his face, whose whole prison careers have

been one tornado of rebellion, and half of whose prison life has been spent in the dark cells and "refractories," fretting like children, refusing their food like children, because their officer has not spoken to them, or spoken, to their jealous fancies, too much to somebody else—women who will be adamant to all but one, and to that one docile and obedient.

Jane Cameron's love for Miss Weston was of this character, although not so generally remarked by prisoners and matrons as other prisoners' fancies. Cameron was very quiet over it; but her love was none the less intense. She had a strange habit of crouching on the floor of her cell, and watching the dress of Miss Weston pass her. At the bottom of the doors of the wing-cells is left a long narrow aperture, either for the convenience of transmitting suspicious sounds into the ward, or for the sake of ventilation, or for some other reason that is a mystery to me, and Cameron would lie extended along the floor of her cell, watching for the matron, occasionally reaching forth her hand, and touching her foot gently, if she approached too

near. If Miss Weston went off duty for a day or two, she became less manageable—once even refused to speak till her return. When the matron's holidays came round, it was necessary for Miss Weston to exact a promise from Cameron to be quiet and obedient until she came back, and Cameron would promise to do her best, and *did* her best, thereby saving all reports. Her delight at the matron's return was the delight of a child who sees its mother's face after a long absence. If Miss Weston were ill, which happened now and then, Cameron would remain very grave and thoughtful, and always at those periods read her Bible more attentively.

When asked the reason for this, she replied that she thought, if she were "mair gude" at that time, God would be gude to her, and bring Miss Weston back again.

Cameron became a fair needlewoman during her prison service, but her health appearing to be affected by constant sedentary employment, Miss Weston persuaded her to put her name down for the laundry. This took Cameron away from the ward, but improved her health for awhile, and Cameron

possessed at all times a certain amount of muscular strength which was serviceable in the laundry.

Here there occurred a slight degeneration of good conduct; and here again is exemplified the dangers of indiscriminate association of *unhealthy* minds. The old hands—women who had never thought of repentance, and were never likely to repent—met at the wash-tub, and whispered over their work their schemes for the future, and their experience in the past—they were No. 1 women, ostensibly good prison characters, and certainly well conducted when the official eye was upon them, but, taken altogether, only women more cunning, and with greater powers of self-restraint. Here were told the anecdotes of their sham repentance, which pleased the chaplain, or their sham illness, which deceived the surgeon; here passed the "stiffs" one to another, or were whispered the personalities which led, now and then, to high words. Only now and then, for the laundry is one of the best-regulated portions of Brixton Prison, and is worth seeing by everyone interested in prison management.

Cameron became more restless and excitable

in the laundry; she was a woman who had lately cared little for association, and become taciturn in "company;" but the new life reminded her of the old, and it was like Glasgow times to hear the "cramp sayings" and the "slang" of the streets. She heard of Susan Marsh more frequently; Susan, who had taken to another pal, and was still a No. 2 woman, having found it more difficult than Cameron to remain good the statutable time necessary for the attainment of the highest order of merit. Susan's defalcation worried her; Cameron had been ever greedy of affection; in the old days, which she had promised to abjure for ever, she could remember being jealous of Mary Loggie's new "pals." Only lately she had told Miss Weston that she had given up Marsh, of whom Miss Weston had warned her more than once; but when the news came that Marsh was "on" with some one else, Cameron felt as though a slight had been proffered her.

"I dinna care," she muttered once or twice; but her spirits sank for awhile, and it was only a reprimand from Miss Weston that brought her round to a more healthy frame of thought.

Time went on; Cameron continued at the laundry, Miss Weston changed places with other matrons, and the prisoner was left to mourn for the one face which had made her prison-home bright.

Here ensued a relapse—not a grievous sign of moral decadence, but a relapse of temper and self-control, which lost her her badge. I believe it commenced in the laundry, by a mischievous prisoner confiscating her soap—a delinquency of constant occurrence, if the prisoner do not look sharply after her own saponaceous property. The desire to make off with something not legally belonging to them, is singularly apparent in the laundry: here is a chance of obtaining a little property on the sly, and, though its value is not proportionate to the risk, still the temptation is too great when the chance lies in the way. Four times during the day the laundry-matron apportions the soap to the washer—hence there are, or rather were in the writer's time, seven, eleven, three, and six o'clock soaps. The three and six o'clock soaps were particularly liable to mysterious disappearances, and no prisoner could lay

down her soap for an instant without its vanishing away like a dream.

Cameron rubbing away at her wash-tub, and omitting to *pocket* her soap, according to general rule, lost it according to general rule also, and charged her neighbour with the misappropriation, which neighbour assailed her with a torrent of vituperation at her honesty being thus impugned. A low angry dialogue ensued, until the crescendo pitch was attained, and sundry threats on the part of the accused to "flop her over the mouth," were followed by gestures indicative of an intention to carry that unamiable threat into execution.

The storm was partly appeased by the interposition of the watchful matron; but Cameron's feelings were outraged, and her civility was not apparent just then. A report followed in due course; further doggedness of conduct on the part of Cameron elicited a second report close upon the first, and Badge No. 1 was summarily confiscated.

Cameron went back to the East Wing—to the brown dress in lieu of the green—and this fall

from affluence and respectability preyed upon her. She had altered sufficiently to be sorry for her disgrace—even to grieve over it, partly for her own sake, partly for Miss Weston's.

"Hae Miss Weston larned a' aboot it yet?" she asked of the matron of her new ward.

"I don't know, Cameron. Shall I tell her?"

"Ye had better brak it to her," she said, as though it were a great blow, for which too much preparation could not be made, "or somebody 'll tell her a big lee aboot it, and set her agin me."

The matron forgot the injunction, and was reminded of it—finally, to appease Cameron, delivered her message.

"Hae ye told her?" was Cameron's first question upon meeting her again.

"Yes."

"She says she'll ne'er spak agin to me—that she's na hope in me any mair, eh?"

"No. Only that she's very sorry."

"Anythin mair?" was the eager query.

"And that she hopes you'll try again, and not

give way so readily. Until she learns to the contrary, she will believe that you are getting on."

"God bless her!—tell her I'll get on again."

Cameron went to work once more with a will—it was her last report for any grave breach of prison discipline.

CHAPTER IX.

DRAWING NEAR.

To evade the charge of telling a story twice over, I can afford to skip over many years in the narrative of Cameron's prison life. Those minor incidents to which I have alluded in preceding chapters are little breaks in the monotony of years, and I need not particularize too closely all the thoughts, trials, and temptations which remained for Cameron before her ticket-of-leave was granted her.

I have not quite done with prison life yet, for the reason that a little remains to be told which will be explanatory of Cameron's actions when once more apart from it; still I shall allude but cursorily to the rules and regulations

which affected her and her position in a more or less degree throughout her term of service "under Government."

Cameron was faithful to Miss Weston during her whole time of imprisonment; the silent deep reverence for her knew no diminution; she was always thinking of her, even praying for her. Occasionally she caught glimpses of her in the airing-ground, or in the kitchen, &c.; she became an inmate in the same ward again, and here her satisfaction and delight knew no bounds, and led her, once, into an hysterical extravagance which nearly brought the matron into trouble with superior officials. Cameron worked her way slowly, even laboriously towards liberty—her health failed her more, but she took a strange persistence in denying that there was any change in her, and in asserting on all occasions that her strength had known no alteration during her whole sentence. She had resolved upon obtaining admittance to the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, if the superintendent recommended her for the next vacancy, and she had given up for ever all thoughts of the old benighted life.

She had sketched a fancy picture of the new career which lay before her: she saw herself honest and respected, and she had been taught to believe—to really believe—in God's blessing on the new efforts which ever after that hour she had resolved to make. She would work hard, get a servant's place, and steadily proceed the upward way; the sins of the past had been clearly set before her, and she understood for the first time their enormity and baseness. In the new life before her, she would make amends for them—she promised that more often to her own heart than to the good chaplain, who had touched it by his eloquence and earnestness.

She was always anxious about the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society—the HOME! After the superintendent had promised to consider the matter—that was three months before Cameron's time was up—Cameron became very nervous and excitable with the suspense of "hope deferred." Would they refuse to recommend her as a fit subject for the attention of the Aid Society?—would they look too closely into her antecedents, and trace back her career, count her breaks-out, her

disobedience to her officers, her resistance to official orders, note all the weakness of the flesh which kept her down and let other, better, prisoners go before her in the race? If they would think of the efforts she had made, of what she had been, and what she was now—if they would not be too hard upon her at the last!

The Superintendent of Brixton Prison is never "hard upon" the prisoners, and is ever anxious to promote their interests. Let a woman be really penitent, or express a hope for a life different from the past, and there is ever a friend to do her best for the woman going out into the dangerous world again. The recommendation was forwarded, and there was hope for Jane Cameron. During those three months the Tempter made his last effort to obtain a fresh clutch of the woman so near her escape, but Cameron held firm, though touched for a while by the attempt.

During these latter days Cameron fell into association with Susan Marsh—also bearing a very fair character then with the prison authorities—who are often deceived, but were never more completely deceived than in this woman.

Susan Marsh and Cameron had left off "palling in" together for years, but the association together at the doors of their cells led to much conversation about the days when they had been friends—the days when they were both to be free. Marsh professed again her old love for Cameron, who listened with more stoicism than was even natural: she liked the woman in her heart still, but she saw the evil in her, and was frightened at it. Marsh spoke of the old life with affection—life in the streets with plenty of money, life with the men!—and Cameron more than once bade her be still and stay her noise.

"I'm ganging to the Hame — I dinna care to hear aboot it," urged Cameron.

"Much good will the Home do you!" grunted Marsh.

On another day Marsh changed her tactics, and spoke after this fashion—

"Jane, I have such an idea!"

"What is it?"

"I'm thinking it would be better for you to go to the Home for a while—till I'm out, which will be six months after you."

"What is yer ganging oot to do wi' me?"

"Just listen. If you and I could set up a little business together with our gratuities — say a shop, where they sell sweets for children—we might get a living and go on quietly. Mightn't we?"

"Ye dinna care aboot bein' quiet, Susan."

"Yes, I do—I'm not going to steal any more. After all, it's hard lines, and to be caught again is to be shut here—oh! for ever so long."

"That's true," replied Jane, shuddering.

"And if we could meet and could live together, we should be so happy—you and I, Jane. Only think how lonely you'll be when you go away from here to the Home."

"Awfu' lanely. It's that I'm skeered at," Jane confessed.

"Let me know where you get to, then—write me a letter telling me how happy and pious you are, and they'll pass the letter."

"I'll think aboot it."

Cameron communicated this conversation to Miss Weston, who warned her of the danger of making any arrangement, or letting Marsh become acquainted by any method with her address.

"Sometimes I think she means well, sometimes I dinna believe there's any gude in her at a'."

"Keep on your guard, Cameron. Be careful of her always. At the last, you will not be likely to give way."

"Ne'er again, Miss—gin I do, I deserve to be hanged."

Still every day Marsh spoke of the new life together, and Cameron evaded every promise for a future acquaintance with her. But the temptation beset her strongly at times, and Marsh had a dangerous eloquence, and a dangerous power of lulling to rest any suspicions against her, or else Cameron, despite all her knowledge of criminal life, was a woman easily deceived by one of her own class.

After the association hours were over, and when Cameron was alone in her cell, the gloomy picture that Marsh had drawn of her hours of isolation often robbed her of her sleep. It was that *isolation* which had distressed her in the first instance, when her own mind sketched the arduous uphill life before her; now Marsh, with an exaggerated blackness of colouring, revived in some degree the picture of what "trying to be good" must be.

To be alone in that world of goodness with which she had had heretofore no acquaintance—to be fighting by herself, perhaps, with a hard task-mistress over her, who saw in every action something that aroused a suspicion—to be earning a few pounds per annum, to be working hard all the week, to have no one to say a kind word to her, to be dependent *upon herself* for everything!

A woman who has been in prison for a long period has this horror of self-dependence highly developed; she has been attended to for many years; she has not had a will of her own, so to speak; food, clothing, and lodging have been found her as a matter of course, and taken as a matter of course; she has degenerated into a machine, and the consciousness of being again thrust upon the world to earn her own living, startles her. If she be a woman who has sinned for bread, in the rash impulse to do something which should keep poverty from herself—perhaps from her little ones—the thought often becomes a horror, and after one slight effort, after being lost for a little while, she drifts back to the prison-house as to her legitimate home.

Still Cameron remained strong. The favourite matron was away, the tempter was at her elbow, but she flinched not from the purpose which she had formed. She would go to the Home, if the Society would have her, and commence a new life—such a life as she had never experienced yet. She knew that her health was not what it had been, and the fear of dying in sin—she understood that phrase now, and it checked the evil that was in her—braced her energies to the task she had resolved to fulfil.

So the time went stealing on, and nearer and nearer with every day came the bewildering, intoxicating thought of LIBERTY.

CHAPTER X.

FREEDOM.

About a fortnight before the expiration of Cameron's time, the lady superintendent informed Jane that the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society would receive her as a penitent, and do its best to obtain a situation for her. The rules were explained to her, how it was necessary to make over her gratuity to the Society, &c. Cameron demurred to nothing, thanked the superintendent for her interest, and was permitted to withdraw.

After that time, the excitable dream-like days set in—the days verging on her freedom—to think of which was to make her head spin. The prisoners envied her the coming liberty, she could see it in their looks. It was known all over the

prison that Cameron was going out in a fortnight's time. In chapel, the "long-timed"—those who had recently arrived, and had years to serve—looked wistfully across at her, pictured themselves in her position, scowled at her, the majority of them, for being luckier than they; those who were nearer the end smiled and nodded, implying by that freemasonry that their own day was not far distant, when they should experience all her sensations; a few of the warm-hearted—there are a few of these to leaven a mass of crude material—found means to congratulate her, and to wish her "luck!"

Not alone in the wings was it known that Cameron was to be free presently, but even in the old prison the news circulated by mysterious means, and was commented upon in prison fashion—

"Cameron's off." "Cameron gives the screws the go-by." "Cameron's going to the Home." "Cameron won't be long without getting into trouble again." "I wish I was in Cameron's shoes, that's all." "Six years for me to serve—six days for her, oh! dear."

Cameron remembered but little of the last few days, save that she lost her appetite, found a difficulty in getting through her dinner, and could not keep her hands from shaking. She was "dazed." Everybody was kind to her; everyone had some little wish to express for her better life; she knew nothing of her work—she was at needle-work then—more than that it was returned very often, and badly done—stitched in the wrong place, &c.; she would laugh in a meaningless manner at every remark, then burst out crying for a reason equally as incomprehensible. During the day she was anxious for the night, that she might think it all over in her cell; during the night she lay restless and feverish, wishing for the day, and the day's distraction, to keep the thoughts away "a wee bit." She was proud of going to the Home—of becoming a free woman—of leaving the prison-walls behind her for ever!

"Tell Miss Weston that I shall write to her when I am in my place," she adjured the matron of her ward to say to the true friend whom she had possessed in prison.

The last day but one she was escorted over to the superintendent's quarters to receive the good news that the warrant for her release had arrived from the Secretary of State, and to hear the few comments on her future life which it is part of a superintendent's duty to express. Then back to prison again, to think of the good advice that had been given her, and of the friendly "I wish you well, Cameron," with which the interview had terminated. Finally, the night stealing on—the last night in Brixton Prison, for the last time drinking her tea in the cell!

In the morning she was up early with a fluttering heart. Long before the prison-bell clanged in the outer yard, and woke the matrons to the business of another day, Cameron was dressed, and at work at her "liberty clothes," trying to make them fit a little better.

The liberty dress is often given in to the prisoner over night, more especially if there be a long journey before her in the morning. The liberty dresses have been made by the prisoners in a wholesale manner, and the short women fall in for the long dresses, and *vice versâ*, occasionally.

There is a little deviation from the strict letter of the law in this, but extensive alterations are required sometimes, and no particular rules are supposed to be in force during the last fleeting hours of prison service.

Jane Cameron altered her dress, and laid it aside for the momentous time when the word should be given to prepare for departure. That morning she prayed for courage to battle with the world, and strength to walk uprightly in it—she was found praying by the matron who first came on duty in the ward that morning.

Cameron's was not an early departure, there being no train to catch—there was time before her to reflect, clean her cell, go to chapel, see the chaplain afterwards. But the time came at length: all was ready; the matron was waiting to accompany her to the Home; there was a conveyance inside the prison-yard for her and her officer; for the last time she emerged from the cell which had been "home" for so long a period.

Her heart sank at the last moment, when she looked around her.

"I wonder whether I shall e'er coom bock!"

she muttered to herself, as she walked rather unsteadily along the ward. There were no prisoners about—only the assistant matron, a familiar face, on duty in the ward. It saved undue excitement to keep the prisoners of that ward under lock and key until the liberty woman had gone her way.

"Gude-bye! I thank ye for a' your kindness to a puir lassie," she said to the matron, who frankly extended her hand towards her, and wished her peace and happiness in life. Cameron, who had her likes and dislikes, had not admired that matron's peculiar method of discipline, but she felt she loved her at that moment for her good wishes for the future. She thought of Miss Weston, and wished that there had been one chance of seeing her before departure—only one sight of the "bonnie face" which had shone upon her, and made prison life endurable.

The preceding night, let it be confessed, to the amazement of disciplinarians, Miss Weston had found her way to the ward—adjacent to her own at that time—and whispered her "good-bye," and heard the woman call God's blessing on her head for all the interest she had taken in her.

Matron and prisoner touched each other's hands beneath the door, and then the interview had ended—a fugitive interview, that the rules would have punished by a fine for Miss Weston, and for the matron who had allowed her to pass in, and Cameron flung herself on the bed and covered her head with the clothes to stifle her sobs. But all *that* belonged to the dark night—THIS was the bright morning. And in the bright morning, at that moment, by chance or otherwise—we are not very doubtful which, however—Miss Weston entered the court-yard on a message to the deputy's office.

"God bless her! I didna think I should gang awa' without seein' her with my ain een, at the last."

This thought comforted Cameron, as Mr. Luckett unlocked the great prison gates, and the carriage passed from the prison into the narrow lane outside which led to life!

To the life which led upwards? or the life that would become

> "The sea-cliff pathway broken short,
> And ending in a ruin?"

The life that resisted temptation to the last, or the life which, after an abortive effort, turned despairing, and dashed headlong down the steep to the old sins?

As we progress towards our journey's end we shall be able to answer the question. I have said that Jane Cameron's is no model life, and in the purer atmosphere which she is seeking now, there looms before her the shadow of temptation to evil. She has trials to encounter yet, and it is not all upward progress with her—she is sanguine and hopeful—too sanguine, perhaps, of the better days that are in store for her. Never again any wrong for her, she thought—never more the life of the streets—of the Glasgow streets, in the turmoil of which her soul had been nearly whirled away. A hard life, but a sober and honest one, with God, *to whom she intended to pray very regularly now*, rewarding her efforts by bringing her new friends, kind faces—pursuits that would keep her employed, and her thoughts far away from the wrong. She built now upon being happy in the new life, which was a mistake, and might eventually

prove a disappointment. In the first flush of high spirits at being free, she looked not only forward to content, but happiness—that fugitive feeling which the best of us so seldom experience.

Poor Cameron! she intended to be good, and she thought she was good already.

PART III.

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FREEDOM.

CHAPTER I.

"THE DISCHARGED PRISONERS' AID SOCIETY."

In the Fourth Report of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society appears this ominous paragraph:—

"It has been found necessary to give up the Female Lodging House, which existed in connection with this Society, from want of adequate means to support such an establishment."

This is a sad confession—more, it is a reproach to the world which looks on, and lets these good things die. The Female Lodging House was the Home, to which mention has been made in these pages—the Home to which every prisoner full of better thoughts looked forward as the one haven from which the devil

was shut out for a while. And for want of public patronage, a little turning of a rivulet of human sympathy in this direction, the prisoner stands in the outer world defenceless, and the one chance which was hers a few years back drifts from her, and leaves the world more hard and stern to cope with.

There is a feeble effort—such an effort must be always feeble—to substitute a female agent for the Home and its advantages—an agent who shall place the discharged prisoner in lodgings, and visit her until such time as a situation can be obtained for her, or she, left to herself, sinks away again from Right. This plan is, on the face of it, far inferior to that which has been relinquished; but it is the best that can be done now—the best which the Society's scanty funds can possibly afford to do.

To write of this good work, the Female Lodging House—in the past tense—becomes the sad task of the author. Three hundred and two women have been assisted to emigrate, or have been found employment by the Society in its time; the number of men is greater, and

two thousand two hundred and sixty-nine have been supported in their first efforts to amend.

The Female Lodging House has been from the outset more of a supplement to the general institution, and want of funds has always stood in the way of its development. But it has done much good in its short day, and many a poor woman now living honestly at home or abroad has reason to exclaim, "God bless the Prisoners' Aid!" Samaritans, with power to heal—moneyed men, to whom a donation is no loss—Christian men and women who may read this book—shall it be said by one poor prisoner in these latter days —"God help me! There is no Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society now?"

"It is useless for either the men or the women to form good resolutions in prison, if they become outcasts on discharge," remarked the late Sir Joshua Jebb, in a letter to the Committee of the Society. "Let anyone attempt to realize their position, without friends, and without the means of employment. What are they to do? It is a vital question."

It is one of the mysteries of public charity—

which, in the aggregate, is noble and munificent—why this institution is not more liberally supported—nay, endowed—by a Government not always sparing in its gifts. I think it would be easy to name one or two establishments supported by Government grants, which have not half the claims to them which this Society possesses. It stands between the discharged prisoner and the unsympathizing streets; it is a refuge from the first temptation, which begins anew from the moment the licence of departure is granted; if it reformed only ten out of every hundred criminals, Government would save by it.

It is an institution that deserves a more than common share of patronage; it is the hospital for souls, and amongst its physicians are wise and good men. Let those who can assist this work show that there are hands and hearts enough to build afresh, on a larger and more extended scale, the Female Home, which want of English charity has left a ruin.

The Female Lodging House in connection with the Prisoners' Aid Society was, if my memory

do not deceive me, originally situated in King's Road, Camden Town, and afterwards transferred to Queen's Road, Pimlico. To one of these lodging-houses went Cameron, there to wait patiently for the next turn of the wheel. In the Female Lodging House she was happy enough; the rules of the establishment were not strict; she was mistress in a great degree of her own actions, and that was a singular sensation at the outset.

The prisoners were not reminded of the gaol by any rules or regulations of this Society—the place was neither more nor less than a Home. With the exception of fixed hours for retiring, a stated time to reach home in the evening, and a rule or two regulating the conduct or order of the establishment, the inmates were left to their own disposal of time, which was putting them, in fact, to the first test of their moral stability.

This was a test which the majority stood well; by their exercise of self-restraint, their obedience to the few orders of the Home, their respect to the matron, and attention to her advice, the women showed their desire to do well for the

future. If there was a fault in the arrangements at the Home, it was in the allowance of too much liberty in the first early *unsettled* days—the absence of one or two extra matrons, or assistant matrons, to play the part of kind advisers and friends. But all was done which the funds would allow, and, as illimitable good followed the plan, there is no need to be hypercritical. The discharged prisoners remained but a short while under the matron's care; there were not lacking generous-hearted patrons to take these women into service, and give them the *one* trial which might be salvation to them.

"Instances have even occurred," writes the Secretary of the "Aid" to the author, "where situations have been obtained for the women on the same day of their discharge, and emigrants have been despatched in two or three days after their release."

Cameron was not above a week at the Home. During that week she realized the idea of what freedom was like; but the streets rendered her nervous, and she was not happy in them. A crowded city, with men and women streaming

by her, reminded her of Glasgow, and she could almost imagine herself unrepentant and wilful still—a thief on the watch!

Every instant she expected some man or woman to emerge from the crowd—some one who appertained to the past, who would claim acquaintance with her, and adjure her by the memory of old times to come back again to the temptations that existed in them. Why should not a Glasgow woman, or Black Barney, turn up to affright her by claiming her as a friend and companion? But the Glasgow woman never came to life, and Black Barney had disappeared for ever.

Cameron was procured a situation at the week's end. A lady visitor to the Home was pleased with Cameron's appearance, and took her into service at a fair salary. Here let me pause to remark that there are a few patrons of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid who take these women into service without giving them a fair servant's wages in return. This is neither just nor politic, and renders the woman's efforts to be honest a more arduous task. I have known an instance of a

woman being taken from the Home to general servant in a twelve-roomed house no extra servant was kept, and remunerat five pounds per annum! This was not beginning, surely.

For the sake of unity to my story, let r a name and local habitation to Cameron's n The lady I will call Mrs. Evans, and her will place in the New Kent Road.

Here in the new home, then, Cameron her new life.

CHAPTER II.

BEGINNING AFRESH.

[R. AND MRS. EVANS kept Jane Cameron's secret ell. From the other servants of the establish-ent—a nursemaid and cook—was held back all owledge of Cameron's grim antecedents; the sitors were not informed of the character of the oman who opened the door to them, and the ildren—there were two in the house—thought r only a nicer and more quiet servant than usual. This reticence is not always the rule, I fear, d much harm is sometimes done by making a ow of Samaritanism. A woman has a horror being pointed out as a discharged prisoner; wever penitent, the name of a prison chills her art, and she sees suspicion in every glance that

falls upon her from the stranger's eyes. Let her look back upon that life herself, but do not betray her to the world, or make a show of her; keep her secret and be kind to her, and she will serve you well and faithfully; or, if she passes suddenly and swiftly away, you at least will not suffer by her rashness. Cameron was supposed by the other servants to be a Scotchwoman, who had been in service in the North, and she made no attempt to undeceive them. At times there were difficulties in the way of answering their leading questions, more particularly as the cook had a brother in Edinburgh, and was continually bringing up the subject of Scotch cities and the life within them.

"Where have you chiefly lived in service, now?" was almost the cook's first question.

"Oh, in Glasgie!"

"Glasgie—that's Glasgow, I suppose?"

"Ay."

"Good families there?"

"Vera gude."

"Yours a good family?"

"Pretta weel."

"Large house?"

"*Vera large!*"

Cameron related this dialogue at a later period to Miss Weston, with a dry sense of humour, but confessed to seeing no humour, at the time, in it. There was a consciousness of her heart swelling, and her voice becoming husky in its utterance, during this cross examination, and she was glad to escape to her work and break the thread of the discourse.

But the children—oh! those children. They were a boy and girl of seven and nine years of age, very inquisitive and obtrusive, yet children of an amiable character, whom Cameron felt that it would not be difficult to love.

The little girl seized every opportunity of eluding her nursemaid, and wandering about the house in search of Cameron. She had taken to the new servant, and was fond of sitting at a few paces distant, watching her at her work, and putting now and then to her those leading home questions which were so difficult to answer.

One day, the nursemaid having taken her holiday, Cameron was placed in charge of the children, and took them out for their usual walk.

The pride of the woman in thus being trusted with the children of her mistress knew no bounds; it was her first taste of real happiness since she had made her way in the world. And to add to it, came the children's very plain assertion to the mother—

"That if Jane were nursemaid, they should like it—oh! ever so much better! Could not Jane be made nurse, and Ann turned into the housemaid for a little while?"

Cameron wrote a letter to Miss Weston that evening—a long epistle, concocted with considerable care, stating how happy she was in her new place, and how she believed it was possible to resist temptation for ever, after this. The letter was written a week after she had entered service, when the novelty of her position, of her independence, had not worn off, and the change was working its beneficial effect. Like all impulsive natures, she was sanguine of the result, and expressed, in her rough, ignorant manner, her assertion of being always able to keep strong, and remain deserving of the interest that Miss Weston had taken in her from the first.

Three or four weeks afterwards, a letter reached Miss Weston of a more lugubrious turn. Cameron had settled down by this time; her health had fluctuated a little, and the monotony of domestic service was offering its first trial to her.

"She was very dull and low-spirited," she wrote; "she did not know what was the matter with her. She fancied that she was going to be ill." There were a few details concerning her place, much expression of hope that Miss Weston was well, and that some day she would call "just for a minute," and afford her a chance of seeing her face again.

Miss Weston fancied that she detected danger in this second epistle, that throughout it there rang the wail of a discontented spirit, which might eventually lead Cameron astray. When the novelty of prison life wore off, Cameron broke out —if she were to break away from good, when the novelty of domestic service had become a thing of the past! Miss Weston, being off duty on the following evening, went at once in search of Cameron. She was a woman with her heart in

the right place, and the fear of Cameron sinking for lack of friendly words, or sign of friendly interest, took her at once in search of the old prisoner.

Cameron opened the door to Miss Weston, and gave a half scream of delight at seeing her.

"It be ye, then!—I hoped ye wud—but I feared it muckle too gude to hope for."

"I have come to spend a few minutes with you, if your mistress will allow me."

"Ye're vera kind," murmured Cameron, with the tears in her eyes.

She hastened away to tell her mistress, and in a few minutes returned.

"I may gae for a walk a little way hame wi' ye," she said. "While I get my bonnet on, Mrs. Evans wishes to hae a wee bit o' talk aboot me."

Miss Weston was shown into the presence of Mrs. Evans, and whilst Cameron, as delighted as a child, ran upstairs to dress for a walk, the mistress and the matron talked of the strange neophyte.

Miss Weston learned the full particulars of Cameron's moral progress—was glad to hear of Mrs. Evans's satisfaction with her servant.

"She's very grave at times, but I hope that she will get over it presently—thoughtful and grave to an extraordinary degree—moreover, she works too hard." Mrs. Evans spoke of Cameron's capabilities and industry as a servant—and be it remarked here, that there are no servants so thoroughly industrious as a discharged prisoner. A woman from the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society or Fulham Refuge—a ticket-of-leave woman, who has been trained for several years to hard work, will do more justice to her mistress than ninety-nine out of a hundred regular domestic servants.

Domestic servants, as a class—there are exceptions, of course—do not take a very especial interest in their mistress's house; will not labour incessantly to keep the house in order, or work over-time rather than there shall be a speck on the windows, or a spot on the boards. They do not clean, scrub, wash as if their souls were in their work, and are not always stirring between five and six in the morning! A discharged prisoner does all these things with a will—she is grateful to the mistress who has taken her away

from temptation. I may add that many of these women are restless in mind, and must work hard to keep the dark thoughts away.

When Miss Weston and Cameron were in the streets, the first eager question of the latter was:

"What do she think o' me?"

"She thinks that you will do well, but that you are working too hard."

"Oh! I maun wark—I canna sit still and think, Miss."

"Think of something that will cheer and sustain you."

"I do try, but then the ither things come."

"What things?"

"Oh! aboot ye—whether ye're na forgeetin' me althegither, and aboot a' the wickedness I hae doon, and what's to becom' o' me if I get mair weak than I am."

"You do not seem weak."

"I'm weak here," she said, laying her hand on her chest, "and I canna beat up aginst it alwa'. And there's the workus ahint that, if I fall sick."

"Pray to God, and He will not desert you, Cameron."

"I pray my hardest sometime, and it dinna seem to do muckle gude," she answered. "If I keep strang, I shall be weel eno'; but if I break up sudden like!"

Miss Weston did her best to put Cameron into a better train of thought, and Cameron, elated by Miss Weston's visit, brightened up and regarded the future less gloomily. She was a woman susceptible to outward circumstances, and this was a red-letter day in her calendar of recollections. It would keep her brighter and more light of heart for a while; she believed it possible now to go on smoothly to the end. She loved her mistress in her humble way, and was grateful for her consideration and interest; she had become passionately attached to the children, who made the place bright, and were the only ones capable of raising a smile to her lips; she was "friends" with the other servants, although their ways were not her ways, and often verged on the incomprehensible. She should get on in time, but the life was very still and quiet and *prison-like*—not much resembling freedom, or what she had once believed freedom to consist of.

She settled down into a state of *forced content.* The new life was not a happy one; she did not seem constituted to experience much happiness therein. In its stead there came a quiet satisfaction in living soberly and uprightly; she was proud of her position in society, and possibly her failing health only rendered her uneasy at that period.

But through it all she was preternaturally calm; and her grave white face earned her a "nickname" from the cook and nursery-maid. Those subordinates, at least, never understood her—were puzzled at her want of interest in things of infinite moment to them.

"Haven't you any relations in London at all, Jane?" asked the cook of her one day.

"Not ane."

"Well, you *are* unfortunate."

After this Jane fancied for a short while that she was suspected by her fellow-servants, and that rendered her uneasy until the suspicion wore off again.

Mrs. Evans reminded her one day that a holiday was at her acceptance, if she were disposed. She

shook her head with a faint smile: there was no temptation in a holiday for her. She begged an hour at stated intervals, to draw those instalments from her gratuity which had been deposited with the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, and she repaired thence to a savings'-bank near Trafalgar Square, where she deposited her surplus funds.

So the time went on.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNLUCKY MEETING.

Miss Weston lost not her interest in Jane Cameron: she was an untiring woman; she never relaxed her efforts to carry on this good work of reformation. There had been always in her heart a slight fear of Cameron's moral decadence; a secret belief that Cameron was likely to give way beneath the monotony of domestic service, and excluded, as it were, from friendly faces. Cameron, in prison, had required cheering words to sustain her for a lengthened period in a good resolution; if she lacked that consolation in her "place," she might become dissatisfied, and more prone to succumb to the first tempta-

tion which beset her. In her prison days, a smile, a good word, an expression of sympathy with her pursuits, would keep Cameron on the right road for months; but deprive her of all these, and let her believe herself forgotten, and she grew dispirited and restless.

Therefore it became Miss Weston's self-imposed task to see Cameron now and then; to show her that, whilst she remained in her situation and still gave evidence of striving to amend, the interest of the old friend would not be likely to diminish. Without a doubt, these fugitive visits kept Cameron resigned to her lot in life—nay, more than resigned.

The first ordeal had been passed through; Cameron had experienced the want of the reaction, and was now quietly and contentedly pursuing her way in life. The grim look softened, the step became more light, and, as she learned to understand and value her mistress's kindness and sympathy, so the new situation became like home to her.

"My mistress asked me yesterday whether I should like to gang abroad wi' her and her

family," Cameron said, during one of these interviews with Miss Weston: "I think the master means to leave here."

"Should you like to go abroad, Cameron?"

"If ther wud be na fear o' meetin' the auld lot; I should like that," replied Cameron. "In a different place althegither, I should feel safer. But ye could na coom and see me e'er agin—ye'd be my dead freend then."

"Your health might be better abroad, Cameron?"

"Ay; and how that troubles me still! Oh, Miss Weston, if I were sure of keepin' a strang woman for ten years mair!"

Miss Weston heard no more of the Evanses going abroad for a long time. Days, weeks, and months sped on; the family went to the seaside, taking their servants with them, and leaving the house in charge of a woman hired for the purpose; and the change of air and scene did good to the Scotchwoman. She returned home with the family, looking well and strong again. When Miss Weston saw her, she asserted that she was almost happy then, that everybody was

very kind to her, and there was nothing in the wide world at which she could justly grieve, but much for which she could honestly thank Him who had been good and merciful to her.

It was consistent with her character to become too sanguine at this juncture—to think that she was above temptation, and that the dangers in her way had receded into the shadows for ever. She could not realize the fact of losing hold of the advantages that she had gained, and sinking back once more. "Glasgie life" was like a bad dream, from which she had happily awakened.

Fifteen or sixteen months passed—I am not certain if it were not a longer period—when Cameron was again questioned about her thoughts of going abroad with the family. The resolution had been definitely arrived at then—the Evanses were going to America, and it was for Cameron to decide upon the advisability of accompanying them, or of procuring another situation.

This seriously unsettled Cameron; a little out of the common way invariably excited her, and she had ever been incapable of deciding what was best for herself. She wrote to Miss Weston; met

Miss Weston, and took counsel from her—resolved at last to abide by her advice, and proceed in the course of a few weeks from England for ever. She shed a great many tears at the thought of going away—of losing the one friend she possessed in the world—and consoled herself with the reflection that it was better for her then, than it would have been months before, when she was not thoroughly satisfied with her position or herself.

At this time came the first shock of a new temptation. Cameron had been sent with a message to a friend of her mistress's living in the neighbourhood, and was hurrying along in her usual characteristic manner, when a hand caught at the fringe of her shawl. She turned round, and discovered herself face to face with Susan Marsh—the old prison "pal"—the woman who had professed an affection for her, and possibly had had for a while that spasmodic liking which asserts itself under peculiar circumstances between female convicts.

"Jennie!"

"Susan!"

Cameron turned white and red, stood and

gasped for breath, finally leaned against the railings of an adjacent house, and stared at this phantom which had crossed her path to scare her.

"I've been watching for you these last two days, Jennie."

"How did ye find me oot?"

"I met another woman from the 'Aid' last week, and she told me that you had a place somewhere about here."

"How lang hae ye been oot?"

"Oh! a few months."

"And what are ye doin' noo?"

"I have taken a little house in a street out of Drury Lane, and am doing needlework. I get lots of work—more than I can do—twice as much as I can do."

"How much are ye paid for it?"

"Oh! the pay's first-rate. I've saved money. I only want a little more help—and I thought that if you weren't quite comfortable here, you and I could live together very nicely."

"I be coomfortable."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" was the selfish response.

Susan Marsh accompanied Cameron as far as the house where the message was to be delivered, waited for her return and walked back with her, expatiating on the advantages of needlework, constant employment thereat, and congenial society when so disposed. Susan Marsh was in a black silk dress, and wore a silk drawn bonnet—altogether a needlewoman evidently well to do in the world.

Jane Cameron listened, perhaps too readily, to all that Susan Marsh had to tell her—believed, far too readily also, in all Marsh's expressions of regret at not being able to induce her to keep house with her; but she remained firm in her resolve to maintain her present mode of life, and shook her head at all Marsh's glowing pictures of prosperity.

"I hope ye'll continue to get on, and keep *quiet*," was Cameron's last assertion.

"Thankee. I shall come and see you soon, and let you know all about it."

"Na; dinna coom—dinna coom any mair," cried Cameron; "I wish ye weel, but I want to live vera quiet mysel."

"Oh! if you don't want to see me, I sha'n't trouble myself to come after you," said Marsh; and with this exhibition of petulance the house-servant and the "needlewoman" separated.

CHAPTER IV.

STEPPING BACKWARDS.

THE next week, and before Cameron had recovered the shock of surprise at meeting with an old Brixton woman, a letter came for Cameron. Cameron recognized the large crabbed handwriting at once—she had seen it too often on the prison "stiffs" to fail in guessing at it—and she thrust the letter in her pocket, and resolved to set about reading it at a more convenient opportunity. She worked very industriously and energetically that day, and *would not* find time to read the letter till she was in her bed-room for the night, and there was not a chance of being intruded upon and discovered with the missive. It was a letter that she was ashamed of—that she was

afraid to open, and yet which she experienced a terrible curiosity concerning. Cameron was a woman greedy of affection, and she was flattered at the idea of Marsh having remembered her during all this period, and being anxious still for her society.

She opened the letter, and found it a long epistle, that took time to get through and understand. It opened forth a new temptation—the temptation of novelty—of relief from the monotony of service! After expressing her love, and sending her love in the usual homely fashion, Marsh asked Cameron to write to her and let her know when was her next holiday. She could afford a holiday herself, and together they might go down the river to Greenwich, or Hampton Court, and enjoy themselves in a quiet way in the country. She would like to have a good long day with the old "pal"—they could come back early in the evening, and go each her own way—surely Cameron would not mind this, or wouldn't disappoint her?

"Mind and write to me whether or no," was the last admonition of Susan Marsh—an admonition

which Cameron neglected for three days, and then attended to on the fourth.

During those three days Cameron wrestled with a host of thoughts—strove very hard to get Susan Marsh out of her mind. She did not seek counsel of the prison matron then—did not inform her mistress who had been her correspondent, but thought on over her work until her head swam. It was merely the temptation of a holiday, after all, she reasoned—a holiday which had been offered so often, and declined so often, that her mistress had given up mentioning the subject—a holiday to which she had a legal claim, if anyone had in the world! And supposing that Susan Marsh was to be her companion—had not Susan told her that she was living a sober and quiet life, and had given up her old ways for good? Why should she not believe that Susan was tired of prison life, and learning to evade it, after her own better fashion? What harm was there in asking for a holiday?

She was three days making up her mind to ask, however—she feared the questions which her mistress might put to her—she knew that she

would have to answer with a lie to her interrogatories, and that it would arouse suspicion to talk of a female friend whom she had ever known. But the temptation of a change of scene was strong upon her; she would like to go down or up the river and catch a passing glimpse of life before she went away to America—to feel that she was free for a day, and responsible to no one. Years and years ago since she was her own mistress; she went wrong then, but she did not think of it at that time!

Jane Cameron asked for her holiday. She thought that she should like to spend one day by herself, buying a few things, and looking about her, in the parks, for instance; and her mistress, suspecting no ulterior design, accorded her consent at once, without embarrassing Jane by awkward questions.

After Cameron had obtained promise to absent herself, and when the day had been named, she paused for awhile to reflect once more. And reflection turned her in the wrong direction, and led her to answer Susan Marsh's invitation in the affirmative.

"Second thoughts are *not* best in matters of conscience," has been remarked more than once—the truth of this assertion was strikingly exemplified in Cameron's case. The conscience that accused her at first, was reasoned down and argued away; the harm which by intuition she knew there lay in Susan Marsh's society, she would not acknowledge—she shut her eyes to the truth, and would not see anything which stood between her and this impulse to feel herself free for awhile.

In the interim between the permission granted and the day of her holiday, she was excited and restless; she made mistakes in her work, and fell into reveries over it. The cook told her that "she was in love," and when she heard about the holiday she was sure of it, and Cameron became the subject of much commonplace jesting, which she bore very well, upon the whole.

She took her holiday in due course, and met Susan Marsh at the steam-packet pier. They went down the river to Greenwich, as first proposed, and, the nervousness overcome, Cameron became elated with the change, and saw nothing

in Marsh's demeanour to object to. They spent a long day together, and the tempter had the whole day to prey upon a disposition never strong to resist evil impressions. Marsh compared her own life with Cameron's, and laughed at Cameron "slaving" on in that foolish fashion; she called that "working herself to death for nothing!" When Cameron spoke of her irregular health, Marsh attributed it all to the hard work—"she could never see the good of working hard without being obliged." She did not wholly drop her mask, however; she allowed Cameron to see that she had imbibed no religious opinions, and entertained not a single thought of things divine, but she expatiated alone on the advantages of needlework and dressmaking—accomplishments taught her in the prison, and now a source of such extraordinary profit to her!

When Cameron told her about America, she had a hundred stories to relate about the dangers of the place, and she dwelt at length on the folly of her friend leaving England, when she could get a good place, *with her character, anywhere*! She did not understand Cameron's partiality for her

place, and horror of new faces—they were fancies, to be ridiculed in any manner most suggestive to this dangerous companion.

On their return homewards in the steam-packet, the mask slipped a little more, but Cameron was more like her old self then, and that new austerity of manner which had puzzled Marsh at first had wholly vanished. There were several mechanics on board—holiday-folk like themselves—and by some means or other, for which Cameron never accounted, they fell into conversation with the two women, and a certain amount of banter and uncouth jesting was the result.

Cameron saw no harm in this—her early life had been too hard and callous a one to be alarmed at the dangers of chance acquaintanceship—this added to the harmony of the day, and was the most natural thing to occur in the world.

It led to some drinking; but Cameron had been able to stand a great deal of drinking at one time, and she forgot that want of practice might interfere seriously with her calculations as to what quantity of spirituous compound she could manage just then. She was startled to find her step

unsteady at a very early period, after one glass of the "real Scotch," which she had tasted last in a Glasgow dram-shop. What her mistress would think or say flashed to her mind, the instant she became conscious of the effects of the drink—a sudden revulsion of feeling set in, and she saw her danger and folly.

"I wish I war hame," she murmured more than once—"what will they sae o' me, if I'm late?"

She refused any more drink, broke away from her new associates, who were becoming boisterous and unruly, and exchanged a few sharp words with Susan Marsh, who thought "the fun" was just beginning, and it was a pity for Cameron to be so "foolish!" But Cameron remained firm, and, when the boat touched land, ran along the platform and up the steps without bidding even Susan Marsh good-bye!

She saw no more of Marsh—that estimable young woman was still talking and laughing with the "roughs," when Cameron, impelled by the force of her better nature, hurried over London Bridge to her home.

It was a late hour, and the fright sobered her completely.

"What will the maister say—what will the mistress say?" she kept repeating to herself as she went back to that peaceful home which had been her refuge from harm.

CHAPTER V.

TURNING.

:N Cameron arrived home, the mistress was
ıg up for her. The Evanses were early
ıle, and all was at rest in their house
:e ten o'clock, on general occasions. It was
ten when Cameron reached home, and the
and nursery-maid had been sent to bed a
minutes before. When the hour was late,
Cameron appeared not, Mrs. Evans had
n anxious concerning the woman who had
faithful to her for so long a period.
ı irregular action on the part of a woman-
ınt—an absence without leave, or an undue
ısion of leave granted—excites an alarm;
a woman of Cameron's character and antece-
s, an alarm accompanied by a grave suspicion.

Prompted by the suspicion, and yet desirous of not judging her harshly, Mrs. Evans dismissed her servants, and resolved to sit up for Cameron. It was a quarter past ten when the heavy single knock at the door apprised her of the servant's arrival, and relieved the mistress at least from one fear which had beset her.

"When I heard her knock," Mrs. Evans confessed to Miss Weston at a later period, "I could not help exclaiming, 'Thank God!'"

Cameron was startled by the appearance of Mrs. Evans at the door; her heart plunged still more wildly when the mistress asked her to step into her room for awhile.

There was danger in cross-examination. She did not know how to answer any questions that might be put to her. She was not sure that she was sober or looked sober, and her fears rendered her still more confused; still, there was no help for it, and she followed her mistress into the sitting-room, breathing a little freer when assured that Mr. Evans was not there also.

"You are very late, Cameron," was Mrs. Evans's remark.

Cameron did not respond to this—did not allege any excuse for her tardy appearance in the house. She stood looking down at the carpet, and shuffling one foot over the other in an embarrassed manner. She did not like to utter a falsehood concerning her late return, and preferred to remain silent and abashed.

"I trust that it will not occur again," said the mistress gravely, after waiting awhile, as though for the answer which had not been forthcoming; "I place every confidence in you, Cameron, and I hope you will not abuse it."

"Na," answered Cameron.

The mistress paused awhile, and then hazarded the very natural question, "What has kept you so late?"

Cameron looked in a half-stolid, half-stupid manner at her mistress. "Weel, I canna tell," she said at last; "I—I lost my wa'."

She wished that she had not uttered that frivolous falsehood the moment afterwards; she saw the face of the mistress shadow over, and she knew that her statement was not believed.

Mrs. Evans was a good mistress, but she was a

mistress who objected to be imposed upon. With a decisiveness very strange to Cameron, she repeated her former caution and dismissed her—

"This must never occur again, Cameron."

"It shall na," was Cameron's answer, before she withdrew from her room and went up-stairs to her own bed-room, where she began crying from the effects of the day's excitement and its result. She rose early the next day, moody and dispirited. She was more sorry for all that had occurred in the morning than she had been last night, when the evidence of her mistress's first displeasure met her on her return. She had been very wicked, she thought; she wished that she had found courage to tell the whole truth to her mistress, and that she had courage now to face it. She was tired with yesterday's excitement, and wondered where her pleasure had lain, and what she had seen in it to keep her out so late. She was disheartened with the thought that by her own action she had directed towards her that suspicion which would for ever afterwards be hard to live down.

The questions of her fellow-servants followed to

harass her, and she had her first quarrel with the cook, for being anxious to know all the details of the preceding holiday. Some high words were interchanged, and a certain portion of them drifted to the upper regions, and brought Mrs. Evans to the scene of contention. Cameron was reproved quietly but firmly, and went to her room that night more dispirited than ever.

From that time set in poor Cameron's winter of discontent. The holiday had upset her, disturbed all her old motives, and rendered her suspicious of ever attaining happiness by honest means. In the midst of the quietness of her past life—that still life to which she had grown accustomed, and wherein she had been learning to become a better woman—came the phantoms to scare her from all that she had been taught was worth striving for.

That which would have been a passing sorrow to minds more stable than Jane Cameron's became a trouble; there was an upheaving—a burden under which she slowly, silently gave way. She had made one step from right, and that one step had disturbed her too much ever to become the same

grave, persevering woman; she formed the morbid idea that it was impossible she could ever be better than she had been in prison; that everything was against her, and it would be easier to give up at once, and end all unavailing efforts. Then there followed the dislike for work, the loss of interest in the labour of her hands, and above all, the belief, exaggerated by the distorted medium through which she saw everything just then, that her mistress had grown tired of her, and was only waiting her opportunity to find a substitute, and turn her adrift on the world!

She fell sick for awhile; for two days was compelled to keep her bed, and be attended by the doctor, for whom Mrs. Evans hastily sent; and when she suddenly rallied, the horrors of the hospital and the workhouse returned with their old force.

With her heart not in her work, this feeble nature began to conceive a craving for a different life apart from the present home; to be more prone to see the advantages of life with Marsh, with whom she could live honestly, she thought.

Cameron confessed afterwards—and, from what followed, there is no reason to doubt her assertion—that she experienced no temptation at any part of this time to go back to the old life—to resume once more any of her past misdeeds. She was influenced by a wild desire to have less restraint upon her actions, to be her own mistress in any way, so that it was honest and would not endanger her liberty. She could shudder with horror at the Glasgow life still; but she could see no happiness awaiting her in the prosecution of her present mode of living. She knew that it would be a step downwards to consort with Marsh; that Marsh was, at the best, thoughtless and intemperate, and she was well aware that Miss Weston would use every endeavour to induce her to remain in her present place.

Harassed by these thoughts, and by other thoughts which we need not dwell upon at too great a length, Cameron went mechanically about her work. She took a liking for the streets, and invented excuses to go on errands which would keep her away for awhile from her home. In her heart she trusted to meet Marsh again—she

had arrived at no resolution yet, but that heart was on the turn, and a feather's weight might direct it away from all the past good intentions.

And in the streets she met with Susan Marsh, as she had hoped. Three weeks or a month had passed since their journey together to Greenwich, when Marsh came again from the west of London in search of her. She was not so well dressed as formerly, but she maintained her old assertion of the profitableness of dress-making, and the extra advantages to be derived from two working together. The voyage to America was settled, the very day was fixed upon, and Cameron, who was sorry for her promise to accompany the family, listened with more intentness than usual to the rhodomontade of her mendacious companion.

They walked about the New Kent Road for an hour together. Cameron forgot her commission in her eagerness to hear every detail of the new life which appeared so promising.

When aware of the time on which she had entrenched, she became alarmed, and her alarm was ridiculed by Marsh.

"Before I'd be frightened like that, at everything that was said to me, I'd bolt!" was the inelegant remark.

"P'raps I shall."

"And come to my street—I'm always at home —we shall get on well together; you'll be as happy as the day is long."

"Weel, if I canna stand service, I must coom. Ye'll see me sooner than ye think, perhaps."

"The sooner the better, Jennie, dear."

She saw the wavering thoughts of Cameron, and redoubled her temptations, and Cameron promised, that if she did not feel happier presently, she would come to her.

And with this rash promise, Cameron parted from Susan Marsh for awhile.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST STRAW.

When Jane Cameron returned home, she was told that Miss Weston had called to see her, waited a few minutes, spent a few minutes more with Mrs. Evans, and then had gone back, leaving her kind remembrances to Cameron.

This annoyed Cameron, although she was doubtful if she were glad or sorry at having missed the woman she loved most in the world. Kind friend and good counsellor as Miss Weston had ever proved to her, Cameron felt that, perhaps, at that particular crisis of her life, she would rather not have met that searching look, from which it had always been so difficult to keep back the truth; but the next moment there came the

belief that Miss Weston might have advised her in her present strait; comforted her, if she had confessed to feeling unhappy; told her exactly what was the right step to make, and given her courage to make it, had she not been idling time away with Susan Marsh.

To complete the dilemma, Mrs. Evans sent for Cameron. The unhappy woman had been despatched on an especial errand, and the long delay had somewhat vexed her mistress. Long delays on messages of importance, and general disregard of orders, will vex the best of mistresses, and I am sure Mrs. Evans was one.

"Cameron, where have you been?"

Cameron mentioned the place whither she had been sent—an answer which did not suffice for her mistress, who wished to know where her servant had been in the interim.

To this question came the servant's customary answer when brought to bay—an answer as prolific with servants of more exemplary antecedents as with women like Cameron—

"Nowhere!"

Mrs. Evans had not been usually persistent with

Cameron, but the reply annoyed her, and on this occasion she sought a more explicit explanation.

"This could not have taken you an hour. You have not met Miss Weston?"

It was too late to say that she had done so, which would have explained satisfactorily for her long absence. She regretted almost that excuse—regretted that it was too late to seek refuge from honest inquiry by a lie!

"I hae na met Miss Weston; I hae been naewhere, save to a shop or twa," was the dogged reply.

"Cameron," said Mrs. Evans very gravely, "you are deceiving me!"

"I'm tellin the truth," she answered.

"No; you are keeping the truth away from me; you are teaching me to lose my confidence in you."

Cameron wrung her hands silently together, but made no reply.

"Have you formed any new acquaintance about here?"

"Na."

"Have you met with any old acquaintance whom you find it difficult to shake off?"

This was a homethrust; but Cameron stood her ground. To the last she must battle it out now, and resist the attempt to discover her secret.

"Na, ma'am," was the short, almost defiant reply.

"Then you have no reason to allege for this unwarrantable delay. You refuse me all explanation, Cameron; you teach me by your silence to mistrust you?"

"Gin I'm na to be trusted, I had better gae awa'," she remarked.

"Think of it, Cameron—you are excited now. Don't talk of going away in a hurry like this," reproved the mistress; "think over all that you have said, and if you feel that you are not happy here, that you cannot trust in me to advise and help you, why, perhaps we had better part."

Cameron remained staring straight before her —a full confession was at her lips, and another kind word would have brought forth the truth— the whole sad truth, which she feared to divulge, and wrongly imagined all this time that it would

set the mistress completely against her. The discovery of the real facts might have deprived Mrs. Evans of her confidence in her servant, but not that servant's confession, had it been uttered simply and truthfully in that hour wherein Cameron's future trembled in the balance.

"You can retire, Jane," was the next remark, and Cameron went from the room to think of all that had been said to her, to make a darker picture from it than the facts of the case warranted.

That was the turning-point of Jane Cameron's career—the one great check to further progress. Bewildered by the turmoil of thought at her brain, she went down stairs, played her allotted part till the hour for general rest, repaired to her room, taking up the pen and ink from the kitchen dresser with her, and then, with the door locked against intruders, she sat down on the edge of her bed to consider what was best to be done, now that she felt utterly wretched and alone.

CHAPTER VII.

CAMERON'S FLIGHT.

THE woman sat down to deliberate, and was lost! This is the old story. She sat down in the solitude of her own chamber to think what was best for herself, whilst in the secret recesses of her heart lurked already the *determination* to give up the life which had become distasteful to her.

She felt that she was abusing all past kindness and confidence; that by the step which she made everybody would think—and would be justified in thinking—the worst, the very worst of her! No one would believe that she was going away to better herself—that it was merely a change of place and occupation—a matter of no great concern to anybody, or one that should lead to any demonstration.

The mistress had even told her to think if it were possible to be happy in her present place; and, as she was thoroughly unhappy, why, let her go away at once, and with no one the wiser as to her whereabouts. She could ask no favour, she would seek no favour from Mrs. Evans or Miss Weston ever again—if they thought that she had gone entirely away, why, that was her luck, and could not be helped! By-and-bye she would write two letters—one to the matron and another to the mistress, explaining her conduct after her own rough fashion, and they might believe it or not, just as they pleased, she thought, a little sullenly.

She endeavoured very hard to rouse herself into a state of indignation with this new world that had been so strange to her; to think that the world was all against her and full of suspicion, which she could not bear any longer, try how she would! If she had tried and failed—this was her consolation—why, she was a poor, weak, ignorant creature, and what else could have been expected from her? She had scarcely ever known right from wrong, and too much was anticipated from

her at the outset. If she had been brought up to right from her cradle-side, that would have been very different. Mrs. Evans and Miss Weston would feel pity for her after a while, and this made Cameron cry, till the bed shook with her convulsive sobbing.

Then to give warning to Mrs. Evans in the morning—that was to be considered next. To go down and coldly state that it was her intention to leave her that day month, and meet again those quiet grave eyes from which she had always flinched. That could not be; she had not the courage, she should never have courage to do that! Then to write her warning, to leave it on the breakfast-tray near her mistress, so that she might see it the first thing, and read it when she took her place at the table. Would that do? Could she bear to be called in after that, and be questioned by both master and mistress, perhaps, to be lectured on the future vacillating steps which took her away from home, to be recommended to try this and that—she who had made up her mind to live with Susan Marsh!

No; she could not write her warning, or give

warning in any fashion. She could not remain another month in that house with her mistress wearying her with well-meant advice, perhaps writing to Miss Weston, and bringing her down to reproach her for the ingratitude which had rewarded the thoughts and interest of years. She could not wait a month, she could not endure service a week longer, she must go away at once! Silently and stealthily out of the house, in the early morning, before the rest of the establishment was stirring, then away like a thief—as she had been—to the new life, less restricted to rule, and therefore to her more congenial. That would be the better plan—that was the only plan comfortable to her, and she resolved upon it.

I do not attempt to say that this was exactly the train of thoughts or their sequence in the mind of Jane Cameron that night, but I believe that she had all these thoughts, and that they beset her and kept her restless till the morning. In that confession of her conduct, made at a later period of her life, she explained forcibly and

simply the motives which led her to go, and the reasons which urged her to adopt this course, and they approximate to that analysis which, in the preceding pages, I have attempted to set before the reader.

Though Jane Cameron is no model penitent—though there have been, before and since her time, women more strong to resist evil—women whose lives would have afforded a better example, although not so fittingly have exemplified a criminal's career—yet I am anxious to set forth in her favour the struggle that this last grave act cost her, and to sift the real motive from the mass of incomprehensibility that had woven itself around it.

And that real motive was the woman's desire for *change*—the half-dulled mind which had always resisted monotony, and sought any excitement rather than submit to it, giving way again to the temptation of a new life, the novelty of which should keep her from despairing. She risked all for that change—true friends and friends' respect, the hope of becoming honest and respected before her death, and chanced sinking

away step by step from all that made life valuable, or offered hope of life eternal.

She was not going away happy—on the contrary, as the night wore on, she became more thoroughly wretched, and yet impelled as by a force beyond her own to the evil that was waiting for her. She lay outside her bed tossing restlessly for a while; then got up, drew aside the blind, and peered down at the dimly-lit road below her, then threw herself upon the bed again, thinking she would wait for the daylight; finally rose, re-lighted her candle, and sat down to write a few lines to her mistress, explaining her conduct as best she could—a rambling incoherent explanation, which her mistress would find in the morning, when the friendly shelter had been abandoned for ever.

The concoction of that epistle was one of the hardest tasks that Cameron had ever set herself, and it was daylight before it was completed. It expressed her sorrow at parting with the mistress, and the necessity that there was to leave her and join a friend in a little business. She had not the courage to tell Mrs. Evans that she was tired of

service, and had therefore thought it best to depart silently from the house. She hoped that the mistress would pardon the rash step which she took; and that God would bless her and her children, was the prayer of her unhappy servant, Jane Cameron. There were no bright thoughts at parting, I have said; on the contrary, the nearer Cameron approached to the fatal step which severed all ties between her and a goodly life, the lower her heart sank. She was an utterly wretched woman before she quitted the house, but she gave not one thought with regard to remaining there. Her mind had been made up to depart, and that was sufficient—go she must! She did not think that it was possible to remain, and her only anxiety was how to steal away without awakening one sleeper, or offering one clue to find her in the dark estate she sought.

When she had finished her letter, she put on her second and best dress over that which she wore, equipped herself in her bonnet and shawl, and looked at her white face in the dressing-glass.

"It frighted me the sicht o' it," she said, "I war so mony years aulder all o' a sudden like."

She knelt down to pray, and then got up again suddenly, *thinking that it would be unlucky to her* —that she had not a right to pray now, or had anything to pray for. With her letter in her hand she stole across the room, opened the door, and went down the stairs like a ghost in the shadows which the daylight had not scared yet. On the first landing she paused, and thought of going back to the children, of taking a last glance at the little girl, who would be sure to miss her for awhile; then the fear of waking the nursemaid caused her to abandon her resolution, and took her down another flight of stairs—past the room wherein her master and mistress slept, and on to the hall, where she paused again, and leaned against the wall to get over the palpitation of the heart which attacked her at this juncture, and of which she had complained for many years now.

She went downstairs to the basement floor, and with an eccentricity for which she could hardly account—an eccentricity born of an old habit—

she laid the fire in the kitchen-grate, lighted it, filled the kettle with water, and put it on the fire to boil.

Since she had been in service at the house, this had been her first task every morning; the cook found a difficulty in rising betimes, and the fire was always ready for her before she joined Cameron in the kitchen, and on this morning in particular, Cameron, in her bonnet and shawl, busied herself about the grate, and prepared everything after the old fashion. It was all arranged for the cook, then, and Cameron, with her hands begrimed with coal-dust, went upstairs again. Her heart was heavier than ever then, and she could scarcely drag one foot after another towards the hall door, the fastenings of which she proceeded carefully to withdraw. Her hand was on the lock when she thought of the letter that she had written to her mistress, and turned back into the parlour, still dark with its closed window-shutters and drawn curtains. The sight of last night's disorder caused her to open the shutters, arrange the chairs, give a hasty dust to the furniture, before she laid the letter on the

centre table, near the place where Mrs. Evans usually sat. This was her last task, and, with her heart at its old mad plunges, the miserable woman went into the passage, opened the street-door, passed out into the cold fresh air, and closed the door behind her, trying it afterwards with her hand to make sure that it was safe.

She hurried down the stone steps, casting a nervous glance upwards at the windows of the first floor, where her employers slept, and fearful of a blind being drawn aside, and a face looking out at her.

But all was secure; the noise of the closing door had alarmed no one, and she went along the front garden, out of the iron gate on to the pavement, without a check to her downward progress.

At the corner of the first street, she saw through the tears, which were half blinding her, the milkman talking to a policeman—the milkman, who knew her—and she hastily crossed to the other side of the way, and went on with her head averted from him.

The clock of the first church she passed struck six; she counted and thought it was seven,

until the next clock in a public-house assured her of her mistake. She had gone into that public-house for a glass of the old drink—the real Scotch whiskey, which was announced outside on a large board—her nerves were so unstrung, that she found it impossible to proceed farther without a stimulant.

The whiskey drank and paid for, she felt more courage to proceed, and wrapping her hands, grimy with coal-dust, in her shawl, she sternly went on to her fate.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COUNCIL.

Mrs. Evans's cook went downstairs at the usual time, and proceeded about her work without remarking anything unusual in the stillness of the establishment. It was not till she had been half an hour by herself that she began to wonder what Cameron was doing so long in the parlour, and, as time passed, to consider it a mystery singular enough to warrant a search for her. After first calling Cameron, and receiving no answer, she went upstairs into the parlour, saw that the shutters had been opened and the room dusted, and then repaired to Cameron's room, which she found empty. The bed had been lain upon, but not slept in, and this gave her the first idea of

something wrong; she proceeded to the nurse-maid's room, and found the nurse busy over the children, but no Cameron. After putting a few questions without eliciting anything satisfactory, she went over the house carefully, and arrived at the conclusion that the housemaid was not within it, which became a discovery of sufficient importance to communicate to her mistress.

"If you please, ma'am, Cameron's not in the house!" startled both master and mistress, who shortly afterwards descended to the parlour, where the letter, which explained nothing save that she had gone, awaited them, and first attracted Mrs. Evans's attention. The letter was read, and commented upon. The house had been deserted by one of its servants, and that servant was a ticket-of-leave woman! The first natural thought was, had she left it like an honest woman, or like a thief?

Like a thief, it was feared, until search was made, and everything found in its proper place. Nothing had been abstracted; even Cameron's box of clothes was left in her room, unlocked and containing a few things which it had been impossible for her to carry away in her flight.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans talked the matter ove during breakfast, which a rigorous search had delayed, and arrived at the conclusion that it was better to keep the matter quiet at present—more especially from the servants, who were naturally of a loquacious turn. When Mr. Evans had departed to his business, the wife read the mysterious gloomy epistle once more, and sorrowed over it like a true woman. She saw much of the unhappiness and desperation which had impelled Cameron away, and she ran over in her mind all that she had said to her during the preceding night, and wondered if she had been too harsh and stern, and if some chance thoughtless word had been taken to heart and been the cause of this. The natural indignation which had been aroused by so unceremonious and unthankful a departure gave place to pity for the woman who could not do right—who would not settle down to that which was honest and true.

Mrs. Evans wrote a short note to Miss Weston, stating the facts of the case, and implying that, as time was valuable, and the duties of preparing for America were manifold, she should let the

matter drop, and take no further notice of the strange case. As Miss Weston had had an interest in Cameron for a long period, she thought it would be best, at least, to apprise her of the step which Cameron had so rashly made. That night Miss Weston "changed" with another matron, and came at once to Mrs. Evans's house. There she learned the particulars it was in the power of the mistress to give, and read the blurred, ill-written epistle, which implied so much, and yet explained so little.

Miss Weston, who understood Cameron's mind more completely than anyone living, guessed the whole story at once. It was a variation of Cameron's prison-life—the monotony depressing her, something crossing the even tenor of her way, morbid thoughts following one another and accumulating until there came "a break-out;" and all sober resolves flung impetuously aside.

This was the worst "break-out" of all. Cameron was beyond Miss Weston's help or advice; she had broken away from those laws by which she had promised to abide. The matron's quick

mind leaped at once towards the truth—l
Cameron found a companion, a short girl, w
a fresh colour and fair hair? had her habits
come irregular lately? had she taken a holi
and stayed out late? had she become fond
going on errands in the streets and lingering
them until patience at home was exhausted?

Mrs. Evans knew nothing of a compan
although she imagined that Cameron had
with one; and Miss Weston related the stor
the old affection which the missing servant
entertained in prison for Susan Marsh.

Notes were compared, Cameron's past ec
tricities dilated upon, and it became easy to ju
how the story had ended. It was "one n
unfortunate" added to the number; nothin
statistics—only an extra figure in a blue-b
perhaps; but to these two thoughtful and
ligious women it was one SOUL hurled a
from Heaven. Miss Weston, who had kn
Cameron so well, had a faint hope that
meron would repent suddenly and seek
out or write to her. With this hope at
heart she pleaded still in favour of her str

protegée. "I believe," she said, "that Cameron will recoil at the first sight of the old life, and write to me to help her: I may hear from her to-day, or to-morrow. I think it very likely that this Susan Marsh has deceived her as to her mode of living. If I heard at once that Cameron's absence could be explained or extenuated, is it possible to trust her once more?"

"I fear not."

"You are going abroad, and it might be worth the trial again; you do not know what might be Cameron's story, or temptation."

"If she came back to-night, I might induce Mr. Evans to look over it: after to-night it would be impossible."

"Will you at least keep quiet concerning her —drop no hint of her past life—for one week?"

Mrs. Evans promised this. She did not understand the matron, who read her woman's sympathy with the runaway beneath her apparent firmness, and had a faint hope—very, very faint —that, if Cameron shortly appeared, it might be possible yet to extend mercy and help to her.

But Cameron must come suddenly and q back, and bear all cross-examination as t motives for going and returning. Quickly and yet day after day stole on, and no Car appeared!

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT SHE CHANGED FOR.

To return to the woman whose course we have followed so long.

Cameron emerged from the wine-vaults, possessed with more nerve to continue her progress, and went on, asking her way now and then of passers-by.

She was very ignorant of London still: the little she knew of the west end was in Black Barney's time, when she spent a part of a long holiday in a street near Leicester Square, and went to theatres every night. That was all she knew of the west end of London, and it was with no small difficulty that she found her way to the street in Drury Lane where Susan Marsh lived.

Everybody whom she asked knew Drury Lane, but no one was acquainted with the particular street for which she inquired, until she was in the heart of the "back slums," Short's Gardens' way.

Then a policeman, whom she mustered courage to address, knew the street perfectly well, and regarded her with a dubious expression as he gave the required direction, which she forgot in a few minutes after she had left him. Finally, a volunteer was discovered in the form of a *gamin*, who led the way through a maze of narrow streets, and finally left her before a tall dark-looking house—one of a disreputable row.

She was a woman who had been used to disreputable neighbourhoods, and the place reminded her so much of a Glasgow close, that all belief in Marsh's new respectability vanished at once. She would not acknowledge it to herself; she hoped against hope, that it was all right to the last. The door was not open, like the Glasgow houses, so she knocked, and was admitted after a while by a dirty-faced, slip-shod woman.

"Who do you want here?" was the uncivil query.

"Susan Marsh."

"Why didn't you knock for Susan Marsh, then, and not drag me away from my work?"

And leaving the door for Jane Cameron to close after her, the woman flounced back into the parlour.

Cameron proceeded upstairs. She knew that on one of the "flats" she should discover Susan Marsh in time. If her heart could have sunk lower it would have done so at the evidence of poverty and squalor which marked every upward step she took. Save that the steps were of wood instead of stone, that there were no windowless gaps in the walls, and that the stairs were less tortuous and narrow, it was one of the old wicked houses wherein she had been reared. The noises in the place of doors slamming, children crying and voices anathematizing them in the brutal slang of the lowest classes, were the noises of the houses in the close; the fetid smell about the stairs was the Glasgie fever smell, and the faces of the men and women who passed her were the faces of thieves and of women who led abandoned lives.

And she had come back to this! Of her own

free will she had deliberately left all that was comfortable—all that she had learned to value as comfortable, and stepped back into the past wickedness, as though her regeneration had been a dream! I think this utter change, this complete return to a picture of the past destitution and crime, was the salvation of Cameron. Had Susan Marsh's home been in a different place, in a less crowded quarter of the city, it would not have impressed Cameron so speedily with the belief that it was the old life to which she was returning—not have so quickly put her on her guard and offered her at the first step across the threshold that terrible warning of what her life had been, and how it had ended in years of prison servitude.

The whole thing was a shock to her; and though she went on in the course which she had at first resolved upon, it was with a sense of fear that was new. Still the trials and the temptations were not over yet, and there was much to do before one faltering step could be made back on the road she had quitted.

On the landing of the second floor—she proceeded almost mechanically towards the top of the

house, having always lived on top flats in Glasgie days—she found two boys and a man talking together, arguing together probably about a fair share of some spoil unlawfully acquired. She inquired of these men which was Susan Marsh's room.

"This is it," said the man. "I don't think she's up yet. She was on the lush last night, you know."

He applied the heel of his boot to the panel of the door, and began shouting "Mrs. Marsh!" in stentorian tones.

"Come in, you fool, and don't make that row out there. What's the matter?"

"Here's a lady come to have breakfast with you."

"What!"

Cameron tried the handle, and, finding the door open to her touch, she entered, closed the door after her, and faced her "pal," who had struggled into a sitting posture in the bed, and was sitting up rubbing her eyes. By the side of Mrs. Marsh lay another girl, sound asleep throughout all the turmoil.

"Weel, Susan, I hae coom, ye see."

"Good lor'! so it is. Well, I'm blessed!"

Marsh sat and struggled with her perceptive powers. She could not realize the position yet, or understand how it had all come about. After surveying Cameron with her sleepy eyes for awhile, she said—

"A row with the women?"

"Somethin' like it," replied Cameron, who did not care about the fatigue of a long explanation.

"Well, it's luck to see you. I'm glad you've come. You weren't fit for service, I knew. Polly—hi!"

And Mrs. Marsh proceeded to dig into Polly's ribs with her sharp elbow.

"What is it?" grunted Polly at last.

"Here's the young woman I 've been a-speaking about so long—she's come!"

"Oh! ha, the ——"

Polly opened one eye, closed it again, and went off into a renewed slumber of some depth, as Susan Marsh rose and prepared to do the honours of the domicile.

"Ye were drunk last nicht, I hear," said Cameron.

"How did you hear that?" asked Marsh, pausing in her rapid toilet.

"They tald me sae outside."

"Oh! *them* fellers," was the disparaging reply.

Cameron crossed the room, and looked very hard into Susan's face.

"I hope it's a' richt."

"All right!—of course it is."

"That ye hae not brought me into a bad hoose, that ye are behavin' like an honest critter, Susan?"

"Of course I am."

"And the dress-makin'?"

"Oh! that's all right. Sit down, Jennie. I am so precious glad to see you!"

Cameron untied her bonnet-strings, took off her bonnet, and the best dress which she had worn over her worst one, and sat down to make herself at home in this new den. She took one glance round the room—at the plaster broken away from the wall, at the carpetless floor, and the cracked and patched windows facing her, and then she broke into a passionate hysterical sobbing, which she could not control, which alarmed Susan Marsh,

and almost frightened her companion out of her sleep into a fit.

"What's the matter?—what's the matter?"

Cameron could not explain. She sat and rocked herself on her chair, and motioned to them not to come near her; to let her have her cry out, after which she would be better, and more like herself. She had kept firm through it all, but it had been a trial of her strength, and every step away, after awhile, had been made with a pang at her heart. She had gone on in a dogged, persistent manner, like a blind woman; she had made up her mind to do wrong, and she had accomplished it, and there she was at last!

For the first time the true horrors of her position, the thorough consciousness of all that she had entered upon and all that she had given up, rushed at her in full force, and she gave way at the stern truth which faced her now it was too late to turn back.

"This be what I changed far—what I changed far!" she cried, wringing her hands and moaning, after the first hysterical outburst had been overcome.

"Oh! it's all right," assured Marsh, "you'll be happy enough. What's the use of the likes of us being good? Sit still and rest a bit; you'll be yourself presently."

Marsh busied herself with the fire—the wondering Polly began to dress, staring at Cameron all the while.

When the fire was lighted and the kettle boiling, tea was made, and Polly, to whom something had been whispered, disappeared. Cameron asked no questions, but sat stolidly surveying the preparations, silent and gloomy. Marsh did not intrude upon her reverie, but, when the breakfast-things had been laid, made her bed in an unceremonious fashion, and then sat on it till Polly's return with some spirits in a bottle.

Then the two women sat down, and Cameron was adjured to draw her chair to the table with them.

"Don't think any more; what can you be thinking about?" said Marsh.

"I'm thinkin' that I'm a fule."

"Here, take some rum in your tea—there's nothing like it," said Marsh, tilting half the

contents of the bottle into Cameron's tea-cup. "That'll do you good, my girl."

Cameron drank off the tea; had a second cup, and felt more inclined to hope that things would not turn out so badly, after all.

CHAPTER X.

STRIVING AGAINST THE TIDE.

AFTER breakfast Cameron felt sleepy, and was recommended to lie on the bed for awhile. She had been awake all the preceding night, her head had ached very much when she came in, and rum in her tea had not helped to remove that disorder. She followed the recommendation, and lay down for awhile, going off at once into a deep sleep. When she woke up again it was late in the afternoon, and Marsh was frying the dinner, whilst her companion was setting some plates on the table.

"What time is it?" asked Cameron, hoarsely.

"Three o'clock."

"Ah! they're ganging oot wi' the bairns noo

at hame, and the cook's thinkin' o' the meestress's dinner," groaned Cameron.

All the rest of that day associations of this character would occur; with each incident that happened in the new bad home she drew the parallel of what was passing in the old good one. It was a far-off home now; and she already regretted her folly with her whole heart. But she was a desperate woman, and consoled herself with it being her luck to have everything against her. It could not be helped—it was too late to fret or think about it any more—let her make the best of it!

After dinner they began talking of housekeeping arrangements, Cameron's share in the expenses, and so forth. Cameron agreed to everything that they proposed—she would pay her share, of course, until she found work to do.

She kept up the delusion of Marsh being a needlewoman as long as it was possible—it made her position less gloomy to contemplate.

Whilst the three women sat over the fire, Cameron asked if Susan had had any work lately,

and then the truth came out at once. There was no further reason to disguise it.

"I've given up needlework—oh, ever so long!"

"But ye were a needlewoman?" asked Cameron.

"I tried it on for a little while; but, lor' bless you, it wouldn't answer with me. I was never fit for work."

"How do you earn your money, then?"

"*Oh, in the old way!*" was the careless answer.

Cameron stared at the fire and made no comment. She was not shocked, for she had known it the very moment that she had entered the house; she had suspected it before, in their first holiday together, though it soothed her conscience to believe otherwise.

Cameron saw her future very plainly now—the life drifting back into its old vicious channel, a short career of debauchery and theft—drink to keep the thoughts away, and sustain the courage to do evil—and then a policeman's hand upon her shoulder, and the world shut away from her for another term of years. She should see Miss Weston again, after all!

The picture deterred her—the life was frightful,

after having once repented of it—she would keep away from it all—she would try yet!

"Ye micht hae tald me afore, Susan," she murmured, after awhile.

"Oh, you knew it well enough; you're an old hand."

"Ay, that's true eno'."

In the evening Susan proposed that they should go out, and her companion, whom Cameron only knew by the name of Polly, proceeded to daub her cheeks with a red composition from a pomatum-pot. Cameron drew close to the fire, and refused to stir.

"I'm nae coomin'," she said.

"You won't stop here all night."

"Ay, but I wull."

"Come, and have a breath of fresh air, girl."

"I'll stay at hame."

Susan Marsh used all her inducements in vain, and Cameron was left at home, "just to humour her a bit."

The next day the same resolution was maintained, greatly to the disgust and somewhat to the anger of Mrs. Marsh.

"You can't keep this up; you may as well take a turn with us as sit and mope here."

"I'll nae gae oot."

"What'll pay the rent?"

"I'll pay it."

"How much have you got in the bank? You told me you had been a-saving lately, Jennie."

This imprudent revelation of Cameron's had been, doubtless, one reason for Marsh's desire to renew the acquaintance.

"Oh, I hae enou' to keep me for a wee bit, dinna fear."

"Then you won't come out?"

"Na."

Cameron continued firm. She took a silent gratification in remaining at home and resisting her companions' inducements; whilst her money lasted, she thought she might be able to remain strong, but after the money was gone she had her doubts. She made no attempt to procure work of any kind;—it would have been useless if she had;—she was content to sit still and let herself become poorer every day. There was a grim satisfaction in knowing that she was not so

bad as people believed her—as Miss Weston and the Evanses believed her by that time—that she was amongst thieves and profligates, and yet neither a thief nor a profligate herself.

She did not agree well with Susan Marsh after the first few days; they exchanged many angry words, and Marsh taunted her bitterly with her poor attempts to be better than she was herself. Cameron's persistence annoyed her; Cameron had been a clever thief, she was aware, and there was always a chance of a face not known to the police getting on famously for awhile. Cameron would be a stranger to both police and detectives, and the odds were in her favour.

Marsh dwelt upon all very insidiously after they had quarrelled and made it up again—but Cameron would wait a weel, she said, yet. She did not want to leave Marsh's room; Marsh's was a face that she knew, and London was a strange place to her; by-and-bye it would be time enough for her to steal and be taken up for it!

She was altering, and becoming more tired of inaction, perhaps. Still it was presently—pre-

; and she clung to a faint hope—she did
ow what hope—of being able to turn back
ıt an effort of her own.

made no effort—she never wrote to the
ı, who might have offered her much
le advice, and stepped forward, even at the
th hour—who would have been the only
ɛely to believe in her then. But she had
up every effort, and remained sullen,
ate, and immovable.

re was something strange in this dogged-
ıf conduct—this resistance to evil in the
of evil—the putting off the day which
in due course arrive for her. It was the
ragment of a good resolution to which she
; in the midst of this life wholly darkening
ing with every day a deeper shadow—one
light was feebly flickering still.

CHAPTER XI.

DRIVEN FORTH.

Susan Marsh put up with what she called "Cameron's tantrums" the more readily, as she was aware of Cameron's savings'-bank account. She was a woman of the world—a bold woman of a bad world—and she saw pretty clearly in which direction her "old pal" would surely tend in the long-run. She could afford to wait; she understood Cameron better than Cameron understood herself; and she knew how soon a reckless and dissatisfied woman would degenerate into that dark estate in which she and others like unto her were then abiding.

Cameron's persistence, however, in remaining at home, and doing nothing to implicate herself, lasted

nger than Marsh prophesied; but there were gns of the beginning of the end after a week ıd elapsed. Cameron had become accustomed the new world by that period, and isolation om society was beginning to affect her.

The more the days stole on, the more wretched nd unbearable became her position; she be- an to think it would be better to make the rand plunge down the abyss than to sit at home rooding over that which could not be helped! rooding made matters worse, she discovered; she ıuld think of nothing but what her own fool- ırdiness had lost her, and mourn over the des- ıration which had led her to exchange so much at was good for so much that was undeniably ıd.

And it was very dull when Susan Marsh and e woman of the name of "Polly" departed ery evening and left her alone—there was a uel temptation in the streets, and the life which e had adopted for awhile could not be con- ıued without driving her mad.

One night, after they had departed, the horror isolation, the temptation to seek company for

herself and try what life *was* in the London streets, beset her so powerfully that she snatched her bonnet and shawl from behind the door, dressed herself in them, and made for the landing-place outside, where she paused, reflected, and came back.

She sat down on the bed, and had another fierce struggle with the Tempter; it was no good reasoning or arguing—after all, it must come to an end, and she must sink! Possibly this was the Tempter's argument, as it was Cameron's excuse for going forth.

Staying at home did no good; thinking did no good; she was making herself miserable for nothing; she could not go back; everyone believed that she had fallen, and there was no one in the world to trust her again; it was too late for anything but the old wicked life, and she would be less miserable following it than sitting there alone night after night. Less miserable! why, in the excitement of such a life, she had been always light-hearted; had had many associates, earned a great deal of money, been happy after a fashion in "company!" Besides, there was not much danger to follow, and the wholesome terror of a return

to prison diminished in consequence. She was not known in the London streets; if she were so "unlucky" as to be caught at her old trade, she would pass, she hoped, as a "new hand," and get a few months' sentence instead of a long one. It was beginning anew in London, and not like going back to Glasgie, where lay the real danger, whispered the Tempter.

She was very miserable indoors—her health was deserting her again, with close confinement to the house—she would at least venture into the streets, and look about her for awhile. Her money was running short, her clothes were wearing out, and much of her wearing-apparel was in the box at Mrs. Evans's—that box which she had not had the courage to send for yet, despite Marsh's worrying on the subject.

She could bear it no longer—the worst had come, and she must brave the worst. Let her give up thinking that it was possible to keep good, and go forth, chancing everything! She gave no further thought to the subject, but went out of the room, down the stairs, and into the street. She took no heed of her progress, but

strolled along, caring little whither she tended, until she found herself in a bustling and well-lighted thoroughfare.

Then her heart sank fearfully, and she wandered along like a dream-figure. The terrors of the past life came back like a warning to her, and there was no inducement to begin stealing again—to attempt to lure the thoughtless into danger. She remembered strangely enough at this juncture all the good advice she had received lately; and her better nature clung tenaciously in those sad moments to the vantage-ground which it had attained. She could not go wrong easily yet; the old desire to steal her neighbour's goods was gone—she was miserable enough to wish that she might die that night, and so an end to the story.

Women of her class—most of them better dressed than herself—passed her and looked into her face, many of them scowling at her as an intruder upon their *allotted* portion of ground; already the policeman eyed her suspiciously; a strange gentleman came up to her, hesitated, and then offered her a letter, which she took mechanically; people passed and repassed, hustled against her every minute, spoke angrily to her

once or twice for getting in the way and not seeing whither she was going.

She turned to the shop windows, and looked in one after another during her progress, examining everything in its turn, and taking no heed of passers-by, whom it might be possible to lure away or steal from. The night wore on, and she became fatigued; the shopkeepers put up their shutters and closed the doors. Cameron still wandered about the streets, caring not to return home yet awhile—caring for nothing. She was walking thus along the pavement when Susan Marsh, attractively dressed, and with painted cheeks, met her, stared at her, and then uttered an exclamation of astonishment—"So you have come out at last?"

"Ony for a walk," was the reply.

"Well, you wanted a walk—you've been moping in doors long enough."

She glanced at the letter which the stranger had given Cameron, and which Cameron still carried mechanically in her hand.

"What! have you got one of those invitations, too?"

"What do ye call 'em?"

"Invitations to supper, tea, or something, at St. James's Hall; a new dodge of the parsons. Tear it up."

Cameron did not tear it up—on the contrary, opened it and spelt it through.

It was one of the circulars issued by the promoters of the midnight meetings at St. James's Hall—that great grand thought of men to save sinners from destruction, to deprive female sinners of their one excuse—that it was too late for *their* repentance, and that nobody cared for them.

"Whar's St. James's Ha'?" asked Cameron, suddenly.

"Oh! over there—*you* don't think of going?"

"Just for the change—why na'?" said Cameron; "I canna guess what to do wi' mysel—I canna sleep if I gae hame."

Marsh looked at Cameron, and evidently did not like the expression of her face.

"Well, we'll both go, Jennie. It'll be a bit of fun, perhaps, and we shall get supper for nothing. I don't mind going, just for once."

Cameron offered no objection to her company,

and the two women walked up and down the street until half-past eleven o'clock, Cameron proceeding along steadily and gloomily, occasionally leaving Marsh far behind her.

At half-past eleven o'clock these two women crossed Regent Street, and entered the restaurant of St. James's Hall.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TIDE TURNS.

THERE were a hundred or a hundred and fifty women when Marsh and Cameron entered the restaurant; that number had increased to nearly three hundred before proceedings commenced there.

"These are downright bad ones," said Marsh with a display of self-righteousness somewhat remarkable; "not our sort. Nobody wants us here."

"Let me be," was the stolid reply of her companion.

"It's no good stopping here long—they're going to preach—see how late it is!" To all these reasons for departure Cameron returned no answer, but

retained her position in the midst of that assembly of lost women.

She had glanced round and been a witness to the truth of one part of Susan Marsh's remark. The guests were not exactly *her* sort. They did not add theft to their other sins; they were not professional thieves, and, under other circumstances, Cameron would have considered them as women far lower in the scale than herself. Under other circumstances, also, she would have considered the invitation to herself in the light of an insult, and for some time she sat there wondering why the messenger of the streets—the messenger with good tidings—had singled her out, and taken her for "one of those creatures!"

Doubtless, there are some of my philanthropic readers who in the pages of our daily papers read with no small interest the result of that great experiment in St. James's Hall—there may be even a few who assisted at the good work, and by their eloquence and earnestness helped to touch the stubborn hearts of many whom curiosity, even bravado, had led thither. It may be satisfactory to believe that those who made no sign, who went

away, perhaps, shrugging their shoulders at any attempt to make them better than they were—carried away with them, in more instances than ever came to light, the cheering words which gave them courage to amend.

I believe that this attendance of Cameron at the restaurant of St. James's Hall was the turning-point of her career—was the last struggle between good and evil, wherein the good rose silently and undemonstratively to the surface. Cameron has since maintained that her mind was made up before attending that midnight meeting to which I refer; that she was heart-sick already of the life she had chosen, and must have fled from it. The words she heard that night sustained her, but did not alter her—for she had altered already, she alleged.

I believe, on the contrary, that Cameron entered that hall with no settled purpose, sorry for the last wrong step, but seeing no way to rectify it, and prepared for the old life and the lower depths. She was restless and miserable, but she was verging also on that recklessness which dashes on to crime, in despair of the obstacles in the way of an honest existence.

It was a strange scene that met her gaze—at every phase of it there was something to wonder at. It was a new era in many lives; for it told many that there were good men interested in them yet, and anxious to turn them from their evil courses. The faces amongst the audience were a study—the changes upon them were marvellous to witness. Those who had come in brave and defiant tried hard to sustain their characters to the last, but many gave way and hid their faces, and a sad few closed their ears to the warning voice, and stole out of the hall, lest they should be talked into repentance against their will. From all there was a rapt attention, the whispering amongst each other ceased, and when the speakers at the end of the room delivered their homethrusts about the father, mother, and the old days when these women were innocent—childhood's days, when there were many praying for them, and they had not left off praying themselves—a shiver ran through the audience, and more than one broke down and fairly wept. Cameron was affected for a while, more by the evidence of others' remorse than her own; much that was said did not apply to her—she had never

known a good father or mother; no one had been interested in her moral welfare; she had fallen to evil in a natural manner, from which escape would have been a miracle; she had not been carefully watched, tenderly nurtured, and faithfully loved, as many of these women around her.

Still there were words that struck home to her at last. The next speaker appealed to the power which lay in them to turn once more to God for help and strength. He spoke as the chaplains of prisons had spoken to her during her gaol life; of the hour being never too late to give up the sin and seek forgiveness for it; of the Saviour who died for all sins—the Great Intercessor for all like unto her. This was no new story; it had affected her before, but on that night it was told in a new manner, and with more earnestness than she had hitherto witnessed. It was told, I believe, by a great preacher and orator, whose heart was in his work, and whose anxiety to do good carried him onward that night, and impressed the hearts of many. He appealed to all sinners, rather than to one class of them

he made sinning against God look the great difficulty, and seeking pardon and turning from sin a task easy enough to the true penitent; he spoke simply, and Cameron understood him, and drank in every word, and resolved even then that no effort should be left untried to turn back. She listened with dry eyes, and almost an unmoved aspect—her lip quivered once or twice, but no one noticed it; all eyes were on the speaker at the time. When the meeting was over, and the speaker descended from the platform and mingled with the women, chiefly singling out those who had shown evidence of being touched by much that had been addressed to them, Cameron and Marsh went out of the restaurant with many others.

"What a lot of humbug!" one woman exclaimed to her companion as they went out into the streets again. Marsh caught up the words.

"Ah! that's it—what a lot of humbug! was it not, Cameron?"

"How can I tell, Susan?—I dinna care to spake about it at a'."

"Well, we've lost a lot of time, and there's no

luck for us to-night, after running about after the parsons. Let us go home."

Cameron and Marsh went home together—Cameron very thoughtful and taciturn. Polly had not appeared—did not appear that night, and Cameron and Marsh ate their supper together, and made no comment on the past proceedings to which they had been witnesses.

Marsh, on the contrary, spoke of her satisfaction at Cameron "coming out of her shell," of her breaking her resolution to keep always in doors. She augured much from Cameron's restlessness, and, as no word spoken in the restaurant had had power to touch her heart, she did not for an instant believe that Cameron—an old prison-hand like herself—had heard anything calculated to remind her of the dangers which were hemming her in, and from which she must escape at once, or succumb to.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW FLIGHT.

CAMERON slept but little that night; she lay in bed, by the side of Susan Marsh, revolving in her mind her plans for the morning. It was all resolved upon then—she would leave that den of misery and temptation the following day, and go in search of Miss Weston, to whom she would confide everything, and from whom she would beg for advice and pardon. Outside the prison lane she would wait for two nights, being sure that on one or another Miss Weston, being off duty, would leave the prison. That would be her first step; if she succeeded not in it—if Miss Weston were ill or absent on holiday leave, and she failed to see her—then she would go on to

Mrs. Evans, or adopt some course which would show how anxious she was to amend.

She dressed herself with this resolution the following day. A new feeling had beset her by that time, and it was difficult to disguise its effect upon her. There was a fear of Susan Marsh discovering her intention to depart, and by some means thwarting her endeavours. The woman who had been her prison "pal," and had afterwards exercised sufficient power over her to lure her to her evil home, must have no suspicion of Cameron's intention to take flight. Cameron had a great belief in Marsh's cunning, and of the power which she possessed. If she obtained but an inkling of all that was in Cameron's mind, she would exert her ingenuity to stop her; she would begin once more her efforts to prove that there was no life more happy, more bright, more intoxicating than a thief's! She would dwell upon the utter hopelessness of Cameron's thoughts of becoming good again; laugh at her; and show how others—even those who had once believed in her—would laugh at her also. She would horrify her by speaking of the impossi-

bilities which her sanguine nature dreamed of surmounting.

Cameron kept her own counsel, and Marsh, unsuspicious of the great change in the thoughts of her companion, talked at breakfast of the week's proceedings. Marsh was somewhat low-spirited, business having been slack lately, and no "luck" having turned up worth the boasting of.

"We must make a push for it, Jennie," she said gravely, that day: "it won't do to keep on in this slow fashion. We must chance a little more."

"Ay," was the sententious reply.

"I think we might work together better; you'll make a beginning to-night, perhaps. Isn't there any Glasgow dodge that they're not quite up to yet about here, old girl?"

Cameron did not know—perhaps she would think of something presently—her head ached, and she thought that she should like to lie down again upon the bed.

"Oh! don't begin moping any more, Jennie. Let's go for a stroll presently."

No; she did not think she should go out till the afternoon.

"Have you money enough to stand treat somewhere? I'm dull myself, and a *splash* would do a mighty sight of good."

No; Cameron was short of money too. She had given notice at her savings' bank, but the seven days had not expired yet; and there was no inducement even in a *splash* just then.

Marsh broke out into a few forcible reproaches, and then breakfast being finished, Cameron, complaining of head-ache still, lay down on the bed and feigned to be asleep. The hour for action was rapidly approaching, and her heart beat a little faster with the thought of leaving this wretched life behind her.

Here was a second flight being considered in her mind; she thought of her feelings during that night on which she left the Evanses, and what a contrast that old resolution was to this one. Looking back at the past, how unaccountable it seemed to her—how pitiable and even incomprehensible the motive which had lured her from all that which she now ardently desired again. Oh!

if she ever got back to good, ever gained confidence anew, ever returned to that past which a discontented spirit had led her to abandon so rashly!

The last temptation, such as it was, occurred before the day expired. The woman named Polly returned in high spirits, and with orders for a neighbouring theatre fluttering in her hand.

"Look here, what Jack's given us!" was the exclamation; "orders for three—that's us three."

"Ah! I wanted a change," said Marsh; "and it's just the thing to do you good, Jennie. Why, we haven't been to the play for ever so long."

Yesterday Cameron would have brightened up at this. "The play" had had always an attraction for her, and her life lately had been dull and wearisome in the extreme. She feigned to be pleased at the chance of a night's amusement—left the bed to talk of how they should go—and listened to Marsh's principle, of combining a little *business* with all this pleasure, if it were possible.

"You often meet with swell coves in the pit,' was her remark; "and, if it's only a watch, why, it's better than nothing in these hard times!"

"Ah, times *is* hard!" commented Polly.

Cameron's companions were in high spirits at the prospect of a night at the theatre, and Marsh elated in a greater degree at Cameron offering no objection to the proposal to accompany them. It was all right now. Cameron had grown tired of staying in-doors, and the chances were that she would turn out "a good un"—which meant "a bad one"—very speedily now. She had had a fear that Cameron would make herself ill with her "nonsense." Now the nonsense was out of her, matters would progress more satisfactorily. Marsh certainly had some unfathomable kind of affection for Jane Cameron, and the prospect of making her as bad as herself raised her spirits in an extraordinary degree. She went out and bought some whiskey on the strength of the future decadence, and then Cameron hurt her feelings by declining to drink any.

"Not after I've got it, Jennie!" reproached Susan Marsh.

Jane Cameron begged a respite—till her head ached less violently, at any rate. She would not trust herself with the whiskey—the old favourite drink, especially purchased to suit her taste—

that day. Soberly and steadily let her wait her opportunity to escape, and leave no clue as to the direction in which she had vanished.

They were talking about dinner between one and two o'clock. Cameron had been waiting for this, and her heart began beating more rapidly as she made her first step.

"I'm thinkin' I'll buy the dinner to-day," she said.

There was duplicity to escape from, and it was necessary to use duplicity in her turn. She was no model heroine, who would not utter a falsehood even to save herself. On the contrary, she told several untruths to render her withdrawal look natural. She was eager for escape, and her distorted mind could not see any harm in the means by which she might elude the snares that encompassed her. She gave no thought to the falsehood. Let her be gone by any means, at any hazard, out of that abominable house.

"And it 'll do your head good, too," said Marsh.

"I think it will."

"And I'll save your glass of whiskey till you come back."

"Thank'ee, Susan."

"This will make things square," commented Polly, with an eye to equality in the joint expenses: "I stand the orders, Sue the whiskey, and you the dinner. Mind it's something nice, and don't be long."

"Ye need na fear me."

There was a small basket on the floor, and Susan Marsh directed her to take it. This embarrassed Cameron, who did not wish to depart with any of the property of the house.

"I'll bring it in my hond," she said; "I dinna care about baskets—they're in the way."

"What's it to be?" asked Polly.

"Ye'll see, if ye wait lang eno'."

Cameron put the basket down, and went out of the room. Her best dress was hanging behind the door, and she parted with that with regret, at least. She wished that she had put it on in lieu of the morning dress which she wore. Luck—that old idea of luck—was against her at the outset, and depressed her somewhat by way of a beginning.

She went down the ill-kept stairs, floor by floor, towards the street. Out in the street, with

the door closed behind her, she felt that she had started again upon her way, and that the chances against her success were manifold. Still she shook off her depression, and went on with a lighter and a braver heart. She did not feel that misery which beset her in her flight from the true home, and she dragged no heavy weight along with her save that of suspense. Remorse did not dog her footsteps, at least; and, despite of all, there was a hope ahead, a faint speck of light in the darkness, showing the way and keeping her from despair.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WRONG NIGHT.

CAMERON made her way to Charing Cross, and took the omnibus to the corner of the prison lane at Brixton. She was anxious to reach the neighbourhood of the prison before four, lest Miss Weston should have a chance "four o'clock," and start homewards at an earlier hour than usual. The hours at which matrons are free to depart in search of purer air and better society than a prison affords are four and six P.M., the earlier hour occurring once a week at Millbank Prison, not so frequently, for reasons incomprehensible to subordinate officials, at Brixton, Surrey. "Four o'clocks" and "six o'clocks" hence have become familiar terms amongst the officers, although to a new-comer

it is somewhat perplexing, at first, to hear that Miss —— has got a "four o'clock," or Miss —— has very kindly changed her "six o'clock" with a sister officer. Changing each other's "six o'clocks" at Millbank, for the convenience of invitations and engagements on particular days, became so general and led to so much confusion that the practice was finally stopped, and the matron compelled to take the day allotted to her, unless there were urgent private affairs on hand, when a superintendent's permission to change was invariably granted.

What the rules are now I have no opportunity of informing my readers: changes in prisons occur more frequently than in the outer world. Within the last few months, Government has been intently studying its convicts, male and female, and the prisons of my first work are not the prisons of to-day. There is a Roman Catholic service now every day at Brixton, for the convenience of those who profess the Roman Catholic faith; and if the service be *longer*, or the slightest advantage be manifest, the female convicts will "go over to Rome" in a body. Millbank Female Prison is a

thing of the past, and, save a ward or two of "refractories," the waifs and strays of society have been removed to more healthy quarters at Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight. Broadmoor Prison for criminal lunatics, is open, or about to open under a staff of medical governors, &c., and will become the most thoroughly comfortable and *enjoyable* prison ever started in or out of England! With every day an alteration here and an innovation there in the busy prison-world from which Cameron has emerged.

Jane Cameron reached Brixton before time, and took up her position on that side of the way most remote from the old quarters. The prison lies back some hundreds of yards down the lane and Cameron was not likely to be seen by the gate-keeper, or any stray officials. Still she had a fear of being recognized—of arousing suspicion by her propinquity to the establishment. Discharged prisoners found near the vicinity of the gaol from which they have been liberated are naturally to be suspected of sinister motives.

In the writer's own time, a strange and mysterious occurrence took place at Brixton Prison

It remained ever a mystery incapable of solution, and formed the topic of the mess-rooms for some time afterwards. A matron returning one night at ten o'clock to her prison home, was startled to find standing half way down the dark lane, adjacent to the first pair of gates, which always remain open for access to the chaplain and superintendent's quarters without the walls, a woman in her liberty dress. The woman was startled by the matron's propinquity, stepped into the road, passed round the back post, and hurried down the lane again, leaving the matron too perplexed and even alarmed to follow her. The question has often been mooted as to the reason of the prisoner lurking there at that hour of the night. Only a short while previously a woman had quitted prison, vowing revenge on her matron for some fancied slight, and it was possible that her malice had lasted longer than prisoners' malice in general, or there was the still darker suspicion of a black sheep in the midst of the matrons acting as medium and correspondent between the inner and outer world. There were fifty suggestions, but no solution for that which has ever remained a mys-

tery. Probably it might have been a woman like Cameron, impelled to the neighbourhood of the old place for a sight of the favourite officer, or for advice from one who was kind in the days of her penal servitude. It was set down by the general body as a grudge owing to a matron, however, and rendered the ladies of the establishment nervous for a little while. And whilst upon the subject, and for the interest of the new generation of officers that has followed the old, let me remark that a male officer on duty in that long gloomy lane would be of service, in the winter nights more especially.

The most desperate of a desperate class are partial to threats on officers for all past acts that have displeased them, and not a few of them have retentive memories, no discretion, and no fear.

Jane Cameron had found her way back to the old scene with far different motives, and wandered to and fro on the opposite side of the way, keeping ever in view the curve of the lane. She had good eyes, could see to a long distance, and there was no occasion to advance too closely to the prison. She was afraid of that prison still—of

approaching too near—of catching a glimpse of the tower and great buildings over the wall yonder. But she kept on watch—a repentant sinner, looking out for the hand that might save her—point the way to the right road and the true refuge.

But there lay before Cameron one more trial to her powers of self-control—it was not Miss Weston's "night off." She found that out, by her long wearisome watch there—by the hours stealing on—four, five, and six—and the matrons one by one emerging from the lane and going their different ways. Cameron hoped on to the last; but, when seven o'clock struck, she felt that she had chosen an unfortunate time to seek her friend. A matron off duty never lost an hour of her liberty in her room when the weather was fine, and Miss Weston would not appear to-night.

Cameron, with a sinking heart, continued to watch till the prison clock struck eight. She could hear it plainly striking in the Brixton Road, as she had heard it in her cell, hour after hour, in the days gone for ever from her; and then she gave up all hopes of seeing her that

night, and went slowly down the hill towards Brixton Church. She had not been seen during the hours of her long vigil; but it had been a strange watch for her, and there had been faces which had thrilled her in the green lane—the chaplain, the superintendent with her children, many of the matrons under whom she had served, came from the lane that night, and from all she shrank, fearing to show herself, or make one inquiry. She felt that they would distrust her. She had but faith in one of the prison staff—all the rest were to be avoided — even the chaplain, to whom her heart leaped strangely, she dared not face. She wanted a true woman's sympathy and succour—help from one of her own sex in that hour of tribulation, and yet that bright hour of her better womanhood.

She did not despair of obtaining that. She went away disappointed, but not despairing. She would have courage to wait till the following day; and there was no inducement to go back, even in thought, to the guilty life from which she had escaped. Never back there again—rather to die in the streets than to return.

All that night Cameron remained in the streets. She was ignorant of London, and did not know how or where to seek a lodging. In a lodging, people might suspect her to be a thief or a disreputable character—inquire about her antecedents—where she had lived last and with whom —and for what reason she was there alone in London, without a single friend to whom she could give a reference as to character. Alone in the world, friendless at present and suspected always, she resolved to keep to the streets as long as possible.

She returned to London and walked through the streets. Before the shops were closed, she went into a coffee-shop, and had some strong tea and bread and butter. Later she wandered about the streets, or sat down on the door-steps to rest—once in the recess of a bridge, where the water could be heard rippling on through the arches, and where the thought came to her, as she afterwards confessed, that if Miss Weston turned against her—would not believe her to-morrow—it would be best for her to return to this dark spot and plunge forwards to the water, where there would

be rest at last. Her mind, never a strong one, or endowed with great powers of reasoning, fixed itself to this one idea, that it would be better to drown herself than go on to the fresh evils which must come, if no one helped her. It would be one sin more, but it would save her many.

She built only on help from one quarter now—and, if that failed her—why, then the bridge and the cold deep water flowing on through the arches!

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEETING.

CAMERON spent the day in the same listless fashion, waiting for the dawn in which she hoped. Until the hour came to meet the matron, there would be no chance for her again. She sought the same coffee-shop—a quiet shop down a quiet street on the Surrey side of the water—where she sat, waited and dozed the hours away until it was time to return to Brixton once more.

It was cloudy weather all that second day, Cameron remembered, and her new fear of it turning to rain and keeping Miss Weston in-doors was added to the rest of the chances against the meeting, and tortured her with suspense. Fortunately the rain kept off, however, and there was

nothing without doors to prevent the egress of the one friend whom she believed that she possessed still.

Cameron was there at five o'clock. No one attached to the service—at least, no one whom the watcher recognized—appeared till six. At a few minutes past six the first female officer came down the lane and went towards London. Then another matron, then two matrons together, one of whom was Miss Weston.

Miss Weston accompanied by a fellow-officer was a new perplexity unbargained for, and Cameron, nonplussed by the *contretemps*, crept down the street by the side of the Wesleyan Chapel, and waited until they had passed her. The two matrons proceeded down the Brixton Road together, and at a long distance behind them Jane Cameron dragged her weary steps in their track, praying for the friends to separate, and not destroy the one hope of that momentous day. At Brixton Church they stood talking together for a while. They were going to separate: she thanked God for it. Here was the good fortune coming at last! The matrons parted—Miss Weston turning down

Acre Lane, crossing the road to a chemist's shop which then stood there, probably still stands. Cameron, coming round the corner a few moments afterwards, thought that she had lost her, until her rapid glance took in the well-known figure through the glass doors of the chemist's establishment, and then she waited for her, standing a rigid and motionless sentinel, with her back against the wall on the opposite side of the way. There she remained with heart beating very fast, and her face ashen white with the agony of suspense—of nervous trepidation at this first meeting with her whose long kindness she had repaid by much ingratitude. When the shop door opened, she could neither speak nor move, but stood transfixed against the wall, glaring across at the well-known face.

Miss Weston came out, looked across at her, for an instant appeared not to recognize her, then suddenly started, and stopped also. Cameron broke the spell, and rushed across the road towards her.

"Miss Weston! Miss Weston—ye'll speak to me again—ye'll na be too hard upo' me till ye

hae heard a'. Ye canna think what I hae suffered, or what a meeserable wretch I am noo!"

Miss Weston, still too bewildered to speak, turned down Acre Lane with Cameron walking by her side. She had given up all hope of this woman—considered her one more example of vain profession, empty promise, and cruel resolve to return to evil. After Cameron's long silence, she had been sorry for her, but had believed not in the hope of her amendment—that seemed a sad impossibility for ever after that.

"Where have you been—what have you been doing since you left Mrs. Evans?" asked the matron, at last.

"I hae been gangin' wrang, but not gangin' bad," was the answer.

It was a nice distinction, but Miss Weston understood what she meant.

"Who led you away?—Marsh?"

"Ay, Marsh. She foond me oot, and tempted me. She did na say she was a bad ane, but that she was a dressmaker, airning plenty o' siller, and her ain meestress, and I fancied I could do better wi' her. But I want ye to hear a' I hae to tell ye,

sae that ye shall see I hae na been a' bad—that there *is* hope o' me, if ye'll na thraw me ower noo."

"Why, what can I do, Cameron?"

"Oh! somethin', somethin', I hope, or else God help me!"

"You must not build upon any effort of mine now, Cameron—I am afraid I have done all in my power—all I can do."

"Ye are suspeecious o' me still?"

"Yes, I am."

"Richt eno'—I desarve naethin' else," she said, mournfully. The hope of a new life seemed farther away then, and the black water of the river nearer. Still there was the hope to cling to for a time, and she held fast. She commenced the relation of the singular story of her restlessness with the Evans' family, her sudden flight from the house to Susan Marsh, the horror which seized her immediately she had entered the den of thieves, and the fear of resuming the old life which had kept her honest in the midst of the temptation that was ever before her. She spoke of her walk in the streets, of St.

James's Hall and the midnight meeting there, of her escape yesterday, and her one wild hope that in some way or other Miss Weston would help her at the last—for the last time which she vowed help would be ever required, show her but another way to amend. She who was a child in knowledge of all good, would do nothing, think of nothing, for herself. It was a confused, strange, out-of-the-way story, but it was told with simplicity, and with great earnestness—told by an excited woman eager for one more chance of salvation, and truly sorry for the degenerate step that had characterized her progress. Miss Weston had listened at first with suspicion, but the truth of the story had gradually asserted itself, and Cameron with all her faults had never been a hypocrite. Gradually the matron's heart softened; she became interested in the story; she followed it in all its details; she felt for the struggles of the poor woman, swayed by good and evil, and good and evil so strangely intermingled in this tempest-tossed nature, which again, of its own will, sought a haven of refuge.

A long while ago, Miss Weston, unknown to her

sister-officers, or the heads of the establishment, had set herself the arduous task of Cameron's reformation—had been the first to obtain that clue to her character which, once found, proved the master-key to all that was naturally good in her. She had changed this woman's heart—won this woman's love—taught her to fight upwards, and persevere in that self-control and moral effort, which, aided by a religious spirit, would, in God's good time, make a different woman of her. She had been always interested in her; she had followed her progress with interest—the signs of improvement had encouraged her to continue; when Cameron had given way, she cheered her on again—a true Christian, who sorrowed for the fault, but overlooked it when truly repented of, and was never daunted in the good fight, being on the right side, and possessed of a more than common share of moral courage. Could she give up then, when the woman had sought her out once more—when Cameron had confessed that with her was the one chance—the last chance, without which all was over with her in this world and the next? She was oppressed by the magnitude of her task, disturbed by the little hope which stood before

her; she knew how hard of belief the whole world would remain as to the genuine nature of this last effort to amend—how all was against Cameron now—how every heart would shut its sympathy away from her, as every society and refuge would surely close its doors, distrustful of her motives after so much evidence of weakness.

Miss Weston believed in this new phase of Cameron's repentance, but it would be hard to induce others to believe; and judging by Cameron's nature, by her whole previous life, how long was this repentance to last, and when would the reaction come again and drive her back into danger?

She put this question to Cameron, who answered—

"Never. It canna coom again—I hae crushed it a' oot."

"Well, Cameron, I will do my best for you, but you must not be too sanguine."

"God bless ye!" was the answer.

Miss Weston looked at her watch; it was past seven. Would it be possible to reach Mrs. Evans's house to-night, explain matters, and make the effort to induce her to take Cameron to

America, as had been once promised, before she broke away?

"There'll be na time to tell a'," said Cameron, who was affected to tears at this juncture; "I'd do naethin' in a hurry, gin I were ye."

"What is to become of you, meanwhile?"

"Canna I get a quiet lodgin' here aboot?"

"It is possible. Suppose we see about this to-night, and to-morrow I will write to Mrs. Evans."

"Dinna write. Gae and see her, Miss Weston. She will listen to ye, mayhap, better."

"You will accompany me, then?"

"If I feel strong eno' to face her. Oh, Miss Weston, do say that ye think that she will hae me back again."

"I cannot tell yet. We must hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst."

Cameron groaned. Surely the worst had come, and nothing more was in store for her, she implied. Miss Weston bade her keep strong, trust in God, and wait awhile; for the present, patience and faith were alone needed.

It was agreed between them that a lodging should be obtained for Cameron in the neigh-

bourhood, and that the following evening, if she could induce any of the matrons to "change nights" with her, Miss Weston should proceed with Cameron to the New Kent Road, there to make the final effort—an effort of which she despaired in her heart, though she uttered no melancholy forebodings to her humble companion.

A room was found for Cameron in the neighbourhood of Stockwell, where the matron left her, promising to call there the next evening, or the evening following, for her. Cameron felt happy in this new home; its quietness and rest were a comfort to her after that wear of mind which incertitude had brought her. She had overcome a great difficulty, and it was pleasant to think that she had gained one friend to her side once more. After this, her sanguine nature assured her that there *was* a chance for her—and with this hope strong within her, she waited calmly for the next turn of the wheel. For the first time since she had left her place in the New Kent Road, she opened the little pocket Testament which she had brought away with her, and took comfort from the holy words therein.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONSULTATION.

Miss Weston told no one of her meeting with Cameron; it was an incident on which she cared not to dwell. The task was self-allotted; she knew the part which she had to play, and she did not court criticism on her actions, or encouragement to proceed in her good work.

Miss Weston was naturally undemonstrative; few, if any, had guessed her long interest in Cameron, her desire to serve her, and to see her doing well in life. She had one of the warmest and best hearts that ever a prison matron was endowed with; but she was of a reticent disposition, and called no attention to the love and charity with which it was full. She was a

woman, too, who had known trouble and seen better days, and the trouble of others always drew her towards them. Cameron's new trouble had revived all her old interest in the woman who came to her—as to her guardian angel—for help.

Cameron's plunge back towards evil—not *to* evil—had seriously disturbed her, and she had grieved over Cameron's fall as she might have done over a humble sister's. She had given up all hope of Cameron after that, and then, at the very last, the woman had reappeared to prove that all the past good teaching had not withered away.

Miss Weston "changed nights" with a matron, and the following evening sought out Cameron once more. She found her waiting patiently for her, looking hopeful—almost too hopeful—of her future. If the disappointment came, how would Cameron—who always verged on extremes—receive it, she wondered?

They went away together in the direction of the New Kent Road—Cameron pleased as a child at being taken under the protection of the

matron, proud of the matron's society, and evidencing, in her way, all that reverential attachment which had belonged to the prison times.

Miss Weston did her best to curb the exuberant feelings of her companion; to bid her again be prepared for a great disappointment; to think how ill she had behaved to the kind mistress, and what little inducement there was for the mistress to take her back into the household. She must remember the little proof she had to bring forward of her past innocence of intention, and the less encouragement, in consequence, there was to trust in her a second time.

"Ye'll think o' somethin' else for me then, Miss," was Cameron's reply to this adjuration. "I canna but think God will be on my side this time."

They reached the New Kent Road, and approached the house which Cameron had left so surreptitiously. Here the courage, the faith suddenly deserted Cameron, and the fear of all that was in store for her beset her with full force at last. She hung back several yards, and finally stopped.

Miss Weston turned and rejoined her.

"What's the matter, Cameron?"

"I'm thinkin' that I canna get on any mair," she said, "that I'm just dun now! I canna coom further—I'll wait here for ye at the corner."

It had already suggested itself to Miss Weston that this was the better plan, and, in the event of the mission proving unsuccessful, would spare Cameron much mortification. She had weighed this with the advantages of Cameron relating her own story, and had decided in favour of the former method before Cameron's courage deserted her.

"You will keep here till I return, then?" she asked.

"Ay—and pray for luck wi' ye, Miss."

She called Miss Weston back ere she had proceeded many steps.

"Tell her how sair my heart be—how I will alwa do my vera best after this. Ye'll na forget to tell her?"

"Is it likely?"

Miss Weston left Cameron, and proceeded up the long front fore-court to Mrs. Evans's house.

Mrs. Evans was within, the servant who responded to her summons informed her, and, after a few moments' delay, the two women who had done their best for Cameron met face to face once more.

"I have no news for you, Miss Weston," was the first remark of Cameron's past mistress.

"But I have brought you news—I think good news!"

"About Cameron?" was the eager question.

"Yes. She has come back to me—she is anxious to explain all, and atone for all. Hers is a strange story; may I relate it to you, and claim a fair share of your interest?"

"Poor woman! if I have lost my confidence in her, I have not lost my interest."

This did not augur well for Cameron's chance of being taken back; but the matron made no remark, but commenced hastily her story of Cameron's rash impulse, its consequences, the final recoil from the evil which was surrounding the woman, and from which she had mercifully escaped. She did her best in Cameron's service, and the story interested the charitable lady, and won her sympathy at least.

But when the story was told, and Miss Weston had exhausted all her eloquence in its relation, there remained a stern truth to relate in return. Mrs. Evans was sorry for all that had taken Cameron from the house, and rejoiced to hear of the good impulse which had brought her back, but there were many insuperable difficulties in the way of her return to that house. There were the servants, who, after Cameron's disappearance, had had grave doubts, which it was impossible to allay, and who would speedily render Cameron's existence there a misery, by their cross questionings and fresh suspicions; there were Mr. Evans's convictions of Cameron's utter unworthiness, and above all was Mrs. Evans's own reluctance to subject herself for the second time to the inconveniences to which she had been once exposed.

"I have said nothing, nor done nothing in the matter. I have not communicated to anyone, save to my husband, this matter of Cameron's rash departure. It may assure her to know that to the best of my ability I have kept the secret of her flight."

"What is to be done?" said Miss Weston,

mournfully. "Is there no one who will trust hae again?"

"I fear not. What are the rules of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society? Would they take her back again?"

"No, madam."

"Let her return to the lodging which you have found for her, and I will see if anything can be done to get her into a reformatory. You may rely upon my writing to you in the course of a few days."

Mrs. Evans inquired almost immediately afterwards whether Cameron had accompanied Miss Weston. The reply was in the affirmative.

"She must be short of money. She left me without taking the wages which were justly her due. Her box is here still," suggested the mistress of the house.

"She will doubtless send for her box, as she will not have the courage to fetch it herself. Whatever money you may consider her entitled to I will accept for her, if you wish."

The amount was counted up and paid over, and then the matron parted with Mrs. Evans, very

dull at the result of her mission in that quarter, and very doubtful how it would all end.

She found Cameron in the same spot; her great eyes turned to Miss Weston with an eagerness that was touching.

"What does she say—what does she say?"

Miss Weston informed Cameron of the result of her efforts in her behalf, breaking the sad news as well as she was able, and expressing a faint hope that Mrs. Evans might send good news in a day or two. Cameron listened, and shook her head. Her hopes had sunk to zero again.

"I'm thinkin' there'll be na mair gude news for me in this life. I dinna desarve ony—a feckless bairn as I hae ever been. Let's gae back."

Miss Weston put in her hands the money which she had just received from Mrs. Evans, and Cameron said suddenly—

"I'll gae and thank her—I'll gae and ask her pardon. I ought to do that."

Miss Weston hesitated. Mrs. Evans was still busy with her preparations for an early departure for America; time was valuable with her,

and Cameron's presence might be objected to. But Cameron was firm in her intention, and when Miss Weston reminded her of the servants, she expressed her indifference to their recognition of her.

"I will na worry her, or beg a favour o' her—I'll ony ask her pardon and coom awa' agin."

"Then I'd better go back and apprise her of your wish."

Cameron consented to this, and Miss Weston returned and asked to see Mrs. Evans again. Having been once more admitted, Miss Weston apprised Mrs. Evans of Cameron's urgent wish to see her for a moment, to ask her forgiveness for her folly and wickedness.

There was some little natural hesitation, and then Mrs. Evans assented. It would do no good; but if it were any consolation to Cameron, and she were really anxious to see her, let her come.

Miss Weston went to the door and admitted Cameron, who thus entered the house without meeting the servants. In the drawing-room Cameron entered—slowly, submissively, with her head bent low with the intensity of her shame.

"I hae coom to thank ye for a' your kindness to me, which I ne'er deserved, Mrs. Evans, and to ask ye to forgeeve a' the trooble which I put ye to."

She went down suddenly on her knees before her, covered her face with her hands, and broke into a passionate fit of weeping, rocking herself slowly on the floor in that suppliant position. This was a trying scene for all witnesses, and best concluded at once. Mrs. Evans was deeply moved, and with a quivering lip said—

"My poor woman, I forgive you with all my heart. I hope you will do better than ever you have done yet. Pray to God to strengthen you, Cameron, and trust in Him who orders all for the best."

"I hope He will keep me strang—I think He will," she answered.

"Miss Weston and I have been talking of you. I will try what I can do for you, Cameron, in a day or two. You will hear from me again, after I have communicated with my husband."

"Thank ye," was the quiet answer.

"You would not object to enter any reformatory institution?"

"To naethin' that wud show ye I'm not what I hae been," replied Cameron.

The interview terminated thus—Cameron's meeting with Mrs. Evans awakened a greater interest in the prodigal's return, and here was another friend, who would do her best to keep the woman in the narrow way. Cameron's manner had inspired her with greater confidence; and Cameron left the house more hopeful than she had entered it.

Miss Weston was more hopeful also. Mrs. Evans was an energetic woman—better still, a Christian woman, with a great and undying interest in the progress of the weak and erring to repentance; and the matron trusted in her, although she bade Cameron not be too sanguine of good news immediately falling to her share.

It was fortunate for Jane Cameron, at this period, that she had reawakened the interest of two earnest women in her behalf. The last chance for which she had prayed was not likely to be struck entirely away from her.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BETTER LIFE.

MRS. EVANS did not communicate with Miss Weston for several days, although she was far from idle in the good work which she had undertaken. She had met, however, with less sanguine natures than her own—natures less open and more distrustful of human motives; and she had experienced just that amount of failure and opposition which had stirred her heart more warmly in the cause.

The letter came at length, when Cameron was heart-sick with anxiety and hope deferred; and even Miss Weston was beginning to think that possibly Mrs. Evans had let the matter drop for ever, or, tired with unavailing efforts, had given up the struggle. It was a long letter, enclosing

a second to Cameron. It told the whole story of her search for a pure home—a helping-hand to be stretched forth to the struggling penitent, and of the failures that she had met with. But she had arrived at this result: she had induced Mr. Evans to try Cameron once more; not in that home from which her letter was dated, but in the new home in America, whither they were going almost at once. The offer was a singular one: the trial of Cameron was not to commence until the foreign land had been reached; on ship-board she could proceed as a passenger, almost as a stranger to them; and by her conduct during the voyage, and by their experience of her true desire to do well, they would regulate their future plans for her. But they made no engagement with her in England; and at her own expense, in the first instance, was she to undertake this journey. The offer was for Cameron to reflect upon, and a week was given for her decision.

The Glasgow girl made up her mind in an instant; there were no fears concerning the length of her journey, the strangeness of the new land, or for her powers of self-reliance. She saw her

way before her now, and there was nothing to shrink from, and much to thank God for.

A more cheerful woman, a woman more full of confidence in her power to do well, was never seen than Cameron at that period. It seemed as if the one recoil from good had taught her the sternest lesson of her life, and set her mind firmly in the right direction at last. She saw by what a hair's-breadth she had escaped from the gulf, and she was grateful for the mercy that had been extended to her—which ninety-nine out of a hundred in her position would have missed. She was fortunate in having awakened the interest of an energetic Christian woman, who believed in the good resolution that had led her back from the shadows.

Cameron remained in the lodging which Miss Weston had procured for her for several weeks; content to see Miss Weston occasionally, and preparing to the best of her ability for the journey before her. She kept within doors almost too closely for her health; but she had become nervous of the streets, and of those who might meet her there. She was not afraid of any tempta-

tion confronting her—she was above temptation then—but she did not wish to see in her path any reflex of a life she had abjured, to be reminded by one word of what that life was, or might have been again.

She drew her money from the savings' bank, lived frugally and economically, worked on industriously at her "outfit." But still the money decreased, and, when the letter came apprising her of the name of the ship in which it was intended to sail, she was some pounds deficient. She communicated this woeful intelligence to her one comforter and adviser, and Miss Weston supplied the necessary balance.

"I shall pay your siller bock in gude time," said Cameron, trying to keep her tears back, "but oh! Miss Weston, how shall I pay ye all your kindness?"

One can readily guess the matron's answer.

When the days could be counted on the fingers of the hand, Jane Cameron lost a great deal of her composure, and became excited and nervous. Miss Weston saw her more frequently then—in fact, never went off duty without calling for a few

minutes at Cameron's lodging. One evening she found Cameron more excited than usual.

"Miss Weston, I hae been thinking o' my mither," she said—"my mither, who is in New York. Oh! I dinna want to meet her—to see her again."

"The meeting is very unlikely—New York is a large place," was the reply.

"What shall I tell her, if I meet her, though?" urged Cameron.

"That you are leading a new life; and, if she be still the woman you remember in Glasgow, that it must be ever apart from hers. Cameron, should such an event ever recur, remember to hold yourself aloof from every effort to draw you into society or form new acquaintances."

"I'll ne'er stir out o' doors any mair," said Cameron; "she's my ain mither, but I shall pray every nicht ne'er to set een upon her again."

Cameron never met with the mother again; the trial of such a meeting was mercifully spared her.

The last day on which Miss Weston could see Cameron came at length. Cameron had to pro-

ceed on ship-board the following day, and before the next night off duty the penitent would have started for the New World. I need not dwell in detail upon that painful interview, wherein Cameron gave way completely, and showed herself more of the child, by her impulsive grief, than she had ever done in her life. For a short while the coming journey seemed parting from all that was worth living for and loving, and Cameron sobbed convulsively, wrung the matron's hands, and showered incoherent blessings on her head. It was a trial to Miss Weston, and long, long afterwards the troubled face of Cameron oppressed her mind, and seemed ever before her at all hours of the day and night.

She never forgot Cameron—never found awaken in her so deep and intense an interest for other prisoners as she had experienced for that woman. It was the one romance of her life, told to a few of her best friends when she quitted prison life for a less tumultuous sphere. During her prison experience, there crossed her path many women whose career had begun like Cameron's, many phases of whose criminal existence offered a

remarkable similitude to hers. These sorts of women she was always interested in; but they showed no particular interest in their matron, and came and went phlegmatic and stolid to the last. With them, or with those few examples of women more firm and resolute to amend, Miss Weston met with no one to disturb the even tenor of her existence, as Cameron had done. It was her good fortune to turn this one sinner towards repentance—away from the darkness which had enshrouded three-fourths of a life. That was good fortune which made amends for all the "wear and tear" of constitution which *fourteen hours' work a day* incurs upon the prison matron.

The matron and Cameron parted—parted for ever in this world. It was natural to expect that they should never meet again, but the thought was oppressive to Cameron, which was natural enough also.

"To think that I'm ganging awa' for ever, Miss—that there's na hope o' seein ye any mair —not if I were on my dyin' bed."

"I shall write to ye, Miss," she added, "and

if ye will spare a leetle time to send me now and then a gude word, I'll be vera gratefu'."

"Write to me and let me know how you are getting on, Cameron—I shall be very anxious to hear of your well-doing."

"God bless ye! I think that," she cried, "and I shall do weel, whate'er happens, oh! be sure o' that."

So the matron and the discharged prisoner parted—and the steam-ship bore Cameron away to the new world and the new life.

On board that ship, Cameron was anxiously watched—on board, Cameron gave evidence of a new spirit actuating every motive, and rendering her a firmer and more energetic woman. If she wore still the same grave face, it was not the anxiety of the future that shadowed it, but rather the important nature of the duties which she had set herself—her duties to her neighbour and her God.

Those duties, let it be registered here, Cameron never swerved from again. Before New York was reached, Mrs. Evans had learned enough of Cameron's resolutions to feel her old confidence return, and she saw, for the first time, that evidence

of a new religious feeling, without which, perhaps, no reformed prisoner ever kept strong to the last.

But if the new life began, the old strength seemed to diminish. During the voyage, Mrs. Evans fancied that she detected a change, and Cameron had not been many months in her service before the weakness became noticeable, and began to trouble her.

In the one letter which she wrote to Miss Weston, Cameron spoke of her health rapidly failing her—of her fears that she would be snatched from the happiness which an exemplary life had brought to her.

"Still I'm better able to die now," she added; and this was consolation when the news of Cameron's death was sent over the Atlantic to the one woman whom such news was likely to affect.

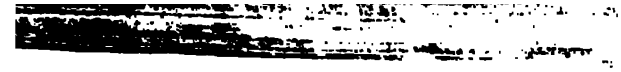
Miss Weston had left prison-service then, and had written to Mrs. Evans inquiring for particulars respecting the progress of her servant. The answer came in due course—the sad answer, that all further progress in this world had been

ested by Him who had thought it best to gather
penitent to His rest.

In that last letter, Mrs. Evans dwelt at some
gth upon the character of Cameron—upon the
at change which had been exemplified in every
and word since Cameron's return to her.

'To the last she was a good servant and a faith-
friend—she died truly penitent for all past
s, and truly thankful for the mercies which
l been vouchsafed to her."

This was the last news of Jane Cameron—the
t and the best!

THE END.

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